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Tippy, the Texan; or, The Young Champion.

BY GEORGE GLEASON.



HE HAD RISEN IN THE STIRRUPS, AND WAS LOOKING BACK; HIS FACE WAS CALM, AND HIS COOL, CALCULATING EYE SEEMED MEASURING THE DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS ENEMIES.

Tippy, The Texan;

OR,

THE YOUNG CHAMPION.

A Story of the Siege of Monterey.

BY GEORGE GLEASON.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO OFFICERS.

The battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma had been fought and won, and the American army, flushed with victory, had crossed the Rio Grande and occupied Matamoras on the very heels of the flying enemy. All possibility of the Mexicans retaining one foot of the territorial empire under dispute, was crushed at a blow, and while the effect of that blow threw both republics into a fever of excitement, it gave our own soldiers a knowledge of their efficiency, and inspired them with a confidence which, no doubt, was a chief cause of triumph in the struggles that followed. Filled with consternation at the result of these first operations of the war, a number of small towns along the river succumbed, with little or no resistance, to the invading power; and then the gallant Taylor, at the head of an army that was not vast but invincible, began his famous march into the interior.

It was a still afternoon on the 19th of September, 1846, that the wearied troops arrived at Walnut Springs, three miles from the city of Monterey. Here they went into camp, and preparations were quickly perfected for one of the most remarkable sieges known to the world. There was nothing absurd in the enemy's conviction that the city was impregnable. It would be impossible for any description to convey more than a faint idea of its admirable defenses, and there is no accounting for the wonderful result of the siege unless it be directly ascribed to the military superiority of the American soldier.

The march from Camargo had extended through a country noted for the beauty of its scenery, but after the halt at Walnut Springs the eyes of the beholders were gladdened by a sight that was truly sublime. Before them lay the rich valley of Monterey, spread out in an undulating plain of rare loveliness, while in its center nestled the city of that name, almost entirely concealed by beautiful groves of peach, apple, orange, and citron trees. Its situation was designated by the tall spire of the cathedral, which alone was visible.

The calm preceding the storm brooded over all, like a boding of death. Not an enemy was to be seen, and no sound came from the walls of the city to disclose the fact that twelve thousand armed men were lying in concealment there, waiting to receive the attack of the invaders.

"Twill be a fearful struggle," muttered a young officer, who stood alone near a tent that had just been pitched. "Our men will receive a severe trial of their courage and skill here, if I calculate rightly," and his handsome eyes sparkled as they swept over the scene before him. "I suppose the forts will have to be stormed with the bayonet, and garrisoned with our soldiers, before we can proceed successfully toward the heart—"

"Ha! Lieutenant Fuller, I've been looking for you," cried a cheery voice at that moment, and a hand was laid familiarly on his shoulder. "What are you standing here so silently for? Confound you, boy; there always appears to be something weighty on your mind. But, I see—you are taking a view of the scenery. Grand, isn't it? If you had been knocked about in this vicinity as much as I have, however, (by the relentless fist of circumstances), you'd be accustomed to it."

The speaker was a fine-looking person, with an intelligent face, and a free, off-hand style of speech that was particularly pleasing. It required no close observer to read him. Those who knew him at all, knew him well. A dashing, dare-devil spirit, with a slakeless thirst for adventure burning within him—always ready for any enterprise that promised danger. A voluntary waif tossed about on the waves of fortune—recklessly brave, yet always prudent when duty toward others demanded it. A true hero, generous to a fault and never out of humor—having a jovial word for everybody, and a helping hand for all who needed it.

"Ah, Major Pefferton," said the young lieutenant, looking up quickly; "is it only you? I fear your abrupt manner will startle me out of my wits, one of these days. I was merely

thinking what a quantity of blood must be spilt, before the star-spangled banner is flung over the battlements of your citadel. It is reported that General Ampudia has long been making preparations to meet us, and should he surrender without a desperate resistance my impression that he is a coward will be verified."

Major Pefferton glanced carelessly at the large rectangular edifice alluded to, and responded:

"We are going to have a brush with the infernal greasers—no two ways about it. But, pshaw! they can't whip us, with all their advantages. If they do I'll bag my head, and keep it bagged throughout the remainder of my natural existence. I'll emigrate to China, and end my days on rice and rats. But I didn't hunt you up to talk on this subject. I have something of more importance to speak with you about."

"Indeed! What's on hand now?"

"Can't you guess?" The major laughed. "Of course you can't. It would be the last thing you'd think of. See here, Fuller; danger has no terrors for you!"

Fuller looked up inquiringly.

"Pardon me," added the major; "I am not a very discerning creature, but I confess I have sometimes caught myself studying you."

"Studying me!"

"It's only because I have taken such an interest in you. I have frequently been struck by your manner. My inference is simply this: you have been visited by some trouble in your past life, and the effect doesn't wear off very readily. Excitement drowns it—you find it pleasanter to be surrounded by deadly foes than by your own retrospective thoughts—you scent danger, as the war-horse scents the battle, and rush gladly into it, to find that alleviation of your mental pain which may be derived from no other source. Pardon me again; I arrive too early at conclusions, no doubt. But this I wish to propound: how would you like to have a little sport before the battle comes off?"

"What do you mean?"

"In a word, how would you like to enter Monterey, and take a close view of the fellows we have to deal with?"

"Major!" exclaimed the lieutenant, with a start.

The question had been put in the light, careless manner characteristic of the speaker, but it was plainly intended for something more than mere pleasantry.

"I mean what I say," responded the major, laughing at his friend's astonishment. "If I don't enter Monterey, it shall not be because I don't make the attempt, and, between you and me and the gate-post, I'm confident of success. Confound it, why not? Danger is the spice of life, and the more thickly it is sprinkled on, the more gratifying it is to my taste. Yours, too, you dog!"

"But this is madness!"

"I don't think so. Tell you why: as you are already aware, five years of my life were spent in Monterey. I only left it to take part in this war. I'm acquainted with every part of the town, and every foot of the ground around it. I speak the language like a native. Disguised as Mexicans, who will detect us?"

"But your object?"

"Spy."

"Self-appointed?"

"Bless you, I have permission to go."

"Permission from whom?"

"General Taylor himself. I have been talking to him about it. At first he refused, but I soon convinced him that I was the most eligible man in the army for such a trust, and being pleased with the probability of gaining some valuable information from the enemy's quarters, he gave his consent, charging me repeatedly to be very careful. He said I could take you with me, provided you were willing to go, but told me I must let you use your own pleasure. I am not to breathe a word of it to anybody else. He'll speak a word to our superior officer, if it is found necessary. The general knows what's best, and if he doesn't look upon the undertaking as a mad one, you may rest assured that it isn't. But, I need a companion, and my reasons for choosing you to act in that capacity are various. We are friends, and understand each other—you have a pretty fair knowledge of the language—what I lack in prudence, you possess—and you have the right sort of nerve."

"Do you go to-night?"

"Go and return before sunrise to-morrow. If one should happen to be detained, the other may be able to make his way back with the information—that is, if we succeed in picking up

any. But, to tell the candid truth, Fuller, my desire to do the general a service is not the only incentive, nor yet the strongest, to the expedition in question."

The major's brown cheeks flushed a little, and waiting until a party of soldiers—who were off duty, and strolling aimlessly by—had passed beyond hearing, he added:

"I don't mind telling you, Fuller. Hang it, I never bothered myself with confidants, and am not used to them, but somehow I don't like to conceal any thing from you. While I lived in Monterey there was a wealthy old gentleman residing there, named Don Estevan de Salmanaca; not a greaser, mind you, but a Spaniard—one of the old Castilian stock—genuine upper-crust! Well, this old Don had a daughter—an only child—who was positively the most beautiful being I ever saw!"

"Ah, major?"

"I tell you she was divine!"

"Ha! ha! ha! Can it be that you have looked on the serious side of life long enough to fall in love?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Anybody would love her, at first sight. It's something inevitable. You don't understand this now, but you will if you are ever fortunate enough to see her. But here's her likeness—just look at that."

He thrust his hand into his breast, and drew to light a small portrait, which he surrendered to his companion for inspection.

CHAPTER II.

A LOVELY FACE.

LIEUTENANT FULLER took the picture and looked at it. He was surprised, notwithstanding he had expected something handsome. It was a face of ravishing loveliness that met his gaze. It resembled one of those ideal gems drawn from extravagant flights of fancy, rather than a faithful depiction from the life.

Major Pefferton watched his friend in silence.

"So that's the picture of your Spanish beauty!" said the lieutenant, as he returned the miniature to its owner.

"Yes; what's your verdict?"

"Angelie!"

"I knew it. And yet, if you will believe me, sir, that copy can give you but a faint idea of the original. The artist who was guilty of such a weak representation ought to be shot. If I had him on the toe of my boot, I'd make him yell the fifteenth letter of the alphabet till he split his confounded throat!"

"It's beautiful, nevertheless. You're a lucky dog, major."

"Lucky?"

"To possess the love of such a creature."

Major Pefferton reddened a little.

"Why—ahem—the truth is, lieutenant, you are laboring under a delusion. It's a one-sided affair, entirely. I'm not acquainted with the lady—never spoke to her in my life."

"How? Love at first sight?"

"Yes."

"Surely, major, in five years you might have found a score of opportunities to obtain an introduction."

"I see you are laboring under another delusion, my dear boy," laughed the major. "It was I who was there five years—not she. Don Estevan and his family arrived at Monterey only three months before I left. They came from the south, and were not long from Spain. I saw her first at church, and I didn't see anything else during the services. I'm ready to swear that my heart was in my throat for twenty-four hours. The next time I met her, it was in the *plaza de toros*. She was with her father and mother. I occupied a seat close to them during the bull-fight. When it was over it would have been impossible for me to give a correct description of the performance in the arena, but I could have told how many times she laughed, and clapped her hands, and waved her handkerchief, and cried 'Viva!' I stared at her, like an ass that I was, till she caught me at it. She blushed then, and her whole manner underwent a change, while I made a mental vow that I would not be so rude again."

"But the picture!" interrupted the lieutenant.

"Where got you that?"

"I am about to tell you," replied the major. "The last time I saw the Donna Francisca (that's her name), we met at a fandango. I had no sooner entered the room than I saw her sitting alone by a window, looking like a queen. Embracing the opportunity, I walked carelessly by her, and dropped into her lap a small bit of paper, on which I had hastily written the words, 'I love you!' I glanced over my shoulder as I passed on. I saw her read the note, and then direct her gaze toward me. There

was something in that look that made me stop, and thrilled me with encouragement. I verily believe I should have turned back and spoken to her, if her father and a young fellow hadn't approached at that moment, and led her away into the dance. She stole a look at me as she went—a look which I construed favorably, of course. Also, I observed that she left something on the seat where she had been sitting. My heart beat wildly—I hurried to see what it was—it was this picture; and lying on the face of it was a sprig of cedar—the Spanish *tuya*! I knew its signification, and for a while dwelt in the eleventh heaven. I thrust both the miniature and the cedar into my pocket. If anybody had asked me to give them up, I should have fled or fought. I permitted myself to hope that she had left them there for me; but I suppose it was purely accidental. The young cavalier hovered around her all the rest of the evening, and escorted her home. I have never seen her since."

"And this young fellow—who was he?"

"I didn't learn his name, though I tried hard enough. He was a stranger in Monterey, and, like myself, an American."

"An American!"

"Yes; and Donna Francisca's lover."

"No!"

"I thought as much when first I saw him, and rumor convinced me. Whether an accepted lover or not, I couldn't find out. They told me he had followed the family from the South, and was a particular friend of Don Estevan's. I tell you, Fuller, it was devilish hard to come away and leave affairs in that state, but my country called, and I gave up every thing else to give her a lift. I want to enter the city now, and see if the old Don and his family are still there, which I believe they are."

"But why now? Why not wait until after the battle? You could then look for him without this risk."

"Ha! ha! ha! you're taking leave of your senses, my boy. True, I might look for them after the battle, and find them, too; but in all probability I would find them dead. That would be transferring the risk from me to them. You needn't look so amazed. I'll tell you what I intend to do."

"Well?"

"I'm going to attempt their rescue!"

"What! Rescue them from their own people?"

"They are not Mexicans—they are natives of Spain."

"True—but what difference does that make?"

"More than you imagine, perhaps. We are here to make war with Mexicans alone. Spanish citizens are wise enough to keep out of the contest, and many of them, I am told, have procured certificates of their nationality from the Spanish Consul, to be used as safeguards."

"Very good," said the lieutenant; "and I presume they deem such a protection sufficient. At any rate, they will hardly accept yours, for although they claim to be neutral, their sympathies are undoubtedly with the other side. Besides, it is more than probable that they have left the city. Or, if not, they may even yet do without your aid, as the town is not invested by our troops."

"If they are gone, it is better for them; if not it is better for me. No use talking—I've made up my mind, and you might as well try to clear away those mountains with a fire-shovel, as to try and change my determination. I have scarcely a hope that the old gentleman will listen to me, but all I want is to see the girl. If I can prevail on her to accompany me without the consent of her father, all will be well. Once in our camp, she will be safe from flying bullets. You may argue the point as much as you like, but my course is marked out, and I shall follow it. Will you go with me or not?"

"Go with you? To be sure I will. I'm ready to follow wherever you may lead, and since you have proposed such an expedition, I'm impatient to be off."

"Good! I knew it."

"But still," added the lieutenant, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "if the only object of the undertaking were to pilot that extraordinary lady out of her apparent danger, I should regard it as the act—"

"Of a love-sick fool," laughed the major, completing the sentence. "So be it, my boy, but if that is your mind, it will be well for you to keep the other object in view. Come, then; we have preparations to make, and no great amount of time in which to make them."

"Hark! what's that?" suddenly ejaculated Fuller.

"By Heaven! Look yonder!"

CHAPTER III. TIPPY, THE TEXAN.

The spot on which the two officers had been standing during the conversation which we have recorded, was a slight eminence near the outskirts of the encampment. Behind them was the main body of the army, in all the bustle and confusion that naturally followed an order to encamp for the night, while before them lay the quiet valley with its attendant scenery.

They were on the point of leaving the spot, when the distant report of fire-arms fell upon their ears, followed by a faint yell. Turning their eyes in the direction from which the sounds proceeded, a singular sight met their gaze.

From their position they had an unobstructed view of the road, as it extended across the plain toward the city, and objects moving on it could be seen at a considerable distance. At the furthest visible point there now appeared a single horseman, coming up the road at full speed, hotly pursued by about a dozen Mexican lancers, whose gaudy equipments could be easily distinguished as they glittered in the sunlight. The race was a warmly contested one. The pursuers had discharged their *escopetas*, apparently without effect, and now, with lances couched and pennons streaming, they dashed after their daring enemy, yelling like Indians the while.

The major and lieutenant were each provided with a small glass. As of one accord they snatched these from their cases, and directed them toward the distant spectacle.

It was instantly observed that the single horseman was a United States soldier—one of the mounted rangers. His blue trowsers, his close-fitting jacket and slouched hat—as well as the rifle he carried—betrayed this fact. He was a young man—a mere boy, as it seemed, with his smooth, handsome face, and small, wiry form—whose movements and attitudes were so graceful as to attract notice and admiration, even at this exciting moment. He was mounted on a dapple-gray pony, which he was putting to the test by occasional applications of the spur. He had risen in the stirrups, and was looking back; his face was calm, and his cool, calculating eye seemed measuring the distance between himself and his enemies.

Suddenly a loud cheer went up from the crowds of witnesses. A small detachment of American cavalry had burst into view, and was charging down the road with drawn sabers, to meet the lancers.

"Hurrah!" shouted the major; "those are Texas rangers!"

"A party from our own regiment, by Jove!" responded the lieutenant.

It was all over in a minute. The Americans met their comrade, and dashed on without stopping. Seeing their danger, the Mexicans halted, wheeled about and galloped back toward the city. Understanding that a chase would lead them within range of the guns of the citadel—which, no doubt, were held in readiness to open upon them with a destructive fire—the rangers also drew rein and returned slowly to camp.

Major Pefferton laughed, as he put up his glass.

"That little rascal," said he, "has no more idea of fear than a goose has of heaven. He'll find himself short of breath one of these days, if he isn't more careful. I suppose he has been making an examination of the enemy's works on his own hook, and was discovered in the act."

"Who is he?" asked Fuller. "I didn't recognize him."

"Didn't recognize him!" echoed the major, in a tone of surprise. "Ah! I remember," he quickly added—"you told me this morning you had never seen him. Of course you didn't recognize him."

"What! is that Tippy, the Texan?"

"That is Tippy, the Texan."

Lieutenant Fuller looked half incredulous.

"He is not what you imagined, I judge!" said the major, smiling.

"By no means," was the emphatic reply. "I have heard so much talk about this remarkable person—whose bravery and skill as a soldier and scout have made his name familiar to the whole army—that I had prepared myself to see a big weather-beaten man, with a brow like a thunder-cloud, and a fist like a sledge-hammer."

"You'll find no such character answering the sobriquet of Tippy, the Texan," declared the major.

"Does he really belong to our regiment?" asked the lieutenant.

"Not exactly," answered the other. "He follows it, fights with it, and is treated as one of

its members, but the colonel says he never enrolled his name. He is a general favorite, and enjoys the liberty to come and go at will."

"Strange I never saw him until to-day!"

"That is easily explained. He didn't appear among us till the day before we marched from Point Isabel, and at that time, you remember, you were cooped up in Fort Brown. He distinguished himself at the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, in which you were permitted to take no part, being exposed to the greater dangers and hardships attending that terrible bombardment. Of course you haven't forgot that you were severely wounded, and lay for a long time in the hospital at Matamoras. You were delirious for two or three days, and during those days I observed that this very same youth was almost constantly by your bedside, regarding you with a troubled countenance, and begging the surgeons and nurses to let him do something for you. I remember distinctly drawing the colonel's attention to the fact, and remarking that the fellow had taken quite an interest in you; but I now think his concern for your welfare was born of a natural sympathy, lightened by the knowledge that you were a Texan like himself, inasmuch as I never saw him go near you after you began to recover. Shortly afterward, he disappeared entirely—scouting around through the country, I suppose, filling up the time which we were compelled to spend in idleness. He next appeared at Camargo, after we had received marching orders, and the reason why you didn't see him on the way hither was because he was one of the scouts thrown in advance of the army."

"A very satisfactory explanation," acknowledged the lieutenant. "But has this fellow any other name besides Tippy?"

"None that I know of. If he has—Ha! here he comes. Now you will have a closer view of him."

Sure enough, the interesting subject of their conversation was seen coming toward them, still striding his dapple-gray pony, but looking as if nothing had occurred.

He approached at a gentle canter, and was about to ride by when the major hailed him.

"Hallo! Tippy, my boy! Been going it blind again?"

Looking toward the speaker, the young horseman smiled, and appeared on the eve of replying, when his eyes rested upon Lieutenant Fuller. He was seen to grow red in the face, and turning his head away as if to hide some sudden emotion, he rode on in silence.

"I didn't know he was so bashful," said the major, in some surprise.

"He's handsome as Narcissus!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "I never saw a finer face on a male being. After all I believe I've seen him before to-day. When or where, I don't recollect, but I think his features are not entirely new to me."

"That is easily explained. You've seen him without noticing him particularly, and without suspecting who he was. But, come! I want to lay before you my plan for to-night's operations."

CHAPTER IV.

A DEATH-STRUGGLE.

A STILL, dark night had drawn its sable curtain over the face of nature, and beneath its shelter calmly reposed the two great armies that were soon to engage in one of the bloodiest struggles known to the annals of modern warfare. The Sierra Madre mountains reared their somber peaks to the starry sky, like a host of mammoth sentinels standing guard over the defenders of their country, and frowning with majestic scorn upon the inferior number of the invaders. At their base, like an inky blotch, slept the fair capital of Nueva Leon—peacefully confident of its own security, and seemingly thoughtless of the shock that was to shake its solid foundation, like the earth at a earthquake, before many more days were added to its venerable age.

The night had scarcely settled—the darkness was scarcely complete—when two men, clad in the leathern habiliments of Mexican herdsmen, issued from the American camp and stole away in the thickening gloom.

They were our friends, Major Pefferton and Lieutenant Fuller. Disguised in full costumes, with the accompanying *serapes* and bread-brimmed *sombreros*, they were setting out to hazard their lives in the desperate adventure before them. Their dress had been well chosen. It made them temporary members of a class of men that was nowhere more largely represented than in this portion of the country, where the rich valleys swarmed with cattle, sheep, goats. In conjunction with that, Major Pefferton

ton had actually amused himself by performing the duties of a herdsman, at one time of his residence in that vicinity, and should any of his old acquaintances recognize him in his present garb, it might be none the worse for him, provided they were ignorant of the change that had taken place in his duties.

In the broad sash twisted around their bodies, each had thrust a *machete*, to complete appearances. Behind, hidden by the folds of their *sarapes*, they carried other weapons that were to be carefully kept out of their enemies' sight—a brace each of Colt's revolvers.

Having passed their own pickets, the two scouts shaped their course due west and pressed forward. Their design was to make a detour of the town, and gain its rear before attempting to enter the walls. Plunging into an extensive field of sugar-cane, they made their way through it in silence, and in a few minutes emerged from its shelter. Here they found themselves close to a road. After a little reconnoitering they crossed it and took to the fields again. Traversing these, and skirting a grove of fruit trees, they soon reached another road, running parallel to the first. With a repetition of the precaution previously taken, they crossed this one also, and speedily left it behind.

Up to this time their progress had been marked by more haste than circumspection. They now changed their course to a south-westerly direction, and as such a change necessitated an increase of caution, they proceeded more slowly, and held themselves ready for action on a moment's warning.

The scene around them was rendered solemn and impressive by the silence and gloom. A puff of wind coming down from the mountains frequently bore to their ears the mournful hoot of an owl, or the sharp, tremulous cry of some roving wolf; but these sounds only made the stillness more awful. Once a solitary vulture—the *zopilote* of Mexico—soared heavily through the air above them, uttering a scream that caused them to start and breathe a little quicker, as they pushed steadily on.

After climbing over a precipitous path, threading the dry bed of an *arroyo*, and picking their way through a dense chaparral, the adventurers approached Independence Hall, on whose summit stood the Bishop's Palace, with its strong fortifications.

Moving by a circuitous route, round the base of the hill, they finally came out on the Saltillo road; and there, with hands and faces scratched, and their clothing by no means improved in appearance, they paused to take breath.

"Here we are," said the major, in a low tone, as his quick eyes glanced keenly around. "This is the Saltillo road. It is the only one running into the town on this side, and the one which we are to follow. Back of us, it winds through a deep, rocky gorge, on its way to Saltillo—but with that part of it we have nothing to do. Our course lies in front—toward the city."

Lieutenant Fuller looked up and down the deserted highway. On either hand it was dimly visible for a few yards, and melted out of sight in the darkness.

A dead hush brooded over all, broken only by the chirp of the cicada in a dark jungle close at hand.

"I suppose you know exactly where we are?" said the lieutenant.

"Oh, of course," answered his companion, cheerfully. "I know every foot of this road clear through Coahuila. We are very near the town, but all the danger of our enterprise is still before us."

"It continues to look more and more like a foolhardy proceeding as we get further into it," said Fuller.

"I don't deny that—but you surely won't turn back!"

"Turn back! I assure you I enjoy it too thoroughly to think of such a thing."

"I thought some people would call this madness, but I don't. The fact is, I am not able to distinguish sense from nonsense. Ha-ha!"

He paused; his face became grave in an instant; his eagle eye swept the road like a flash, in front and rear.

"Did you hear anything?" he asked, quickly.

"Nothing," replied Fuller, "except a slight rustle in the bushes—caused, I presume, by a commotion in the air."

The major listened intently and seemed satisfied.

"I thought I heard a脚步声," he explained, "but I am willing to believe that I only imagined it. If any of our enemies should be skulking in the bushes, near enough to hear us talking, our disguises would not save us. *Vaqueros*

don't speak the American language. But I was about to point out our situation to you. Before us, and not far away, lies our destination; and to reach it we must pass over a road that is, in all probability, strongly guarded by our foes. This, too, without a knowledge of the watchword to be given to the sentinels. Off to our right is the Arroyo San Juan, a small stream that washes the southern portion of the city, and empties its waters into the river of that name. Beyond this stream, and bordering upon it, is Federation Hill, literally covered with soldiers. Independence Hill is before us, on the left side of the road."

"Heavens and earth!" cried the lieutenant at that moment, starting back and grasping his friend's arm.

"What's the matter?" demanded Pefferton, in astonishment.

"He was answered before the words had fairly passed his lips. There was a tramp of feet, followed by the appearance of two shadowy forms, that seemed to rise out of the earth. Gliding forward, the apparitions halted within six feet of the startled Texans, and stood confronting them in a very warlike manner.

"*Buenas noches, señores,*" said one, in a tone of hissing sarcasm.

Our adventurers stepped back, and clapped their hands on their weapons. The mocking salute, uttered in the language of the country, was not needed to show them that they were in the presence of enemies. The dusky forms were now near enough for inspection. Their swarthy faces, with their peculiar uniforms and arms, were sufficient to betray the truth. They were Mexican soldiers.

The abruptness of their appearance told more. They had been lying in concealment near by. The inference drawn from what they had heard was also made known, by the unpeaceable manner in which they presented themselves. They had discovered the trick intended to deceive them.

In the first shock of their amazement and alarm, our friends had almost drawn their weapons, to act on the defensive, when they bethought them of the part they had come there to play, and changed their tactics.

"*Buenas noches, amigos,*" said the major, in a smooth voice. "You alarmed us. We feared you were foes."

The Mexicans looked at each other in evident surprise. Then one of them replied with a sneer:

"Señor understands our language well, but he speaks more fluently in the American tongue. *Carrá!* we are not fools to be deceived by so flimsy a ruse. You are a couple of Yankee spies!"

Pefferton lifted up his hands in seeming astonishment.

"Indeed you mistake!" he exclaimed, earnestly. "We are not spies. We are poor *váqueros*, who had our horses stolen by American soldiers, and we want to place ourselves under the protection of our army."

"*Vaya!*" was the impatient rejoinder. "Your story is not plausible. *Váqueros* generally converse in the dialect of their people."

"And do I not?"

"You did not a moment since. *Carrá!* this is useless. Lay down your arms and come with us. You are our prisoners!"

"But, surely, you will not—"

"Silence! we will have no more. Unless you obey, we will shoot you in your tracks. Since you desire the protection of our army, we will turn you over to the general. Come! be quick!"

It was enough; the time for action had arrived. Knowing that it would be far better to fight than to surrender, Pefferton gave the word to his companion, and simultaneously they leaped upon their opponents.

The latter carried guns. Seizing these, the scouts put forward all their strength and tried to wrench them from the grasp of their owners. Backward and forward, from one side of the road to the other, reeled the contestants, making no noise except that occasioned by their labored respiration, the shuffling of their feet on the ground, and the clank of the huge spurs attached to the heels of the pseudo-herdsman.

After a brief struggle, Major Pefferton succeeded in gaining possession of his adversary's gun. Clutching it by the barrel, he gave it a preliminary flourish, and aimed a deadly blow at the head of its former possessor. With the nimbleness of a cat, however, the Mexican sprung aside in time to save himself, and the musket slipping from the major's hand, went whirling into an adjoining field. Seeing his advantage, the Mexican drew his *machete*, and rushed forward to end the contest. But the major was as quick as he. Before he could

make the fatal thrust, a sinewy hand grasped his uplifted arm, and another *machete* was plunged into his breast. The Mexican sunk to the ground with a deep groan.

At that instant a stunning report rang out upon the night air, and went rolling back among the hills in a succession of startling echoes. Pefferton, who had dropped upon his knees beside his victim, leaped to his feet like a flash, and stared wildly around.

The explanation was before him. The other Mexican was lying motionless in the middle of the road, and standing over him was Lieutenant Fuller, with a smoking revolver in his hand.

"Fuller—my God!" cried Pefferton, huskily.

"I couldn't help it, major," panted the lieutenant. "It was that or death! He twisted my knife out of my hand, and in another moment I should have been where he is now."

Just then a shrill voice on the neighboring height cried out: "*Centinela alerto!*" answered by another further on toward the city.

"Come!" said the major, hurriedly; "we must leave this spot without delay. Put your pistol out of sight and secure your knife. But stay—it will not do to leave these bodies lying here. Lend me a hand—quick! We must hide them."

Laying hold of the bloody corpses, they dragged them into some bushes by the roadside. Other traces of the struggle were hastily removed, and then—pausing only long enough to bend his ear to the ground, and dart his piercing eye through the surrounding darkness—Pefferton said:

"Follow me, and make as little noise as possible."

Leaving the highway, they entered a cornfield, whose tall stocks afforded a valuable screen to their movements.

Hurrying through this a short distance, they turned to the left, and pushed on rapidly toward the city. Their course now lay precisely parallel with the road, and about midway between it and the Arroyo San Juan.

CHAPTER V.

SOUNDING A SENTINEL.

WITH noiseless tread and strained ears, the two Americans threaded the intricacies of the cornfield—the major being too thoroughly acquainted with the ground to have any fear of losing his way. The eager haste with which they pressed forward, was not caused so much by a desire to make amends for the loss of time, as by an intuitive knowledge that it would not be well for them to be found on the scene of the fight, should any of their prying enemies take it into their heads to investigate the mystery of the shot. No sounds as yet—save the warning cry of the guard—told that the report had had any effect on the minds of the multitude that must have heard it; but they did not accept that as a favorable omen. Perhaps something was going on in utter silence, that would lead to their capture, unless they proved themselves cunning enough to ward off so dreadful a mishap.

They had not proceeded far when they found themselves, rather unexpectedly, on the edge of the field.

As they emerged from the shelter of the thick-growing maize, they were greeted by a sight that brought them to a dead halt.

On an open plain before them—though at a distance of several hundred yards from where they stood—a large number of fires were gleaming brightly through the darkness, like a starry constellation. Their significance was plain enough. They marked the situation of a Mexican encampment. There was further evidence of this in the opaque bodies that were constantly moving about among the fires and the few white tents, whose outlines were just traceable in the feeble light.

The spies held a whispered consultation. "A body of our enemies is undoubtedly encamped below us," observed the major; "and the chief difficulty of our undertaking is at hand. Of course they have guards stationed all around the camp, and these are to be passed before any thing else is done toward the accomplishment of our purpose. It is needless to tell you that this will be no easy matter."

"That is very clear," said the lieutenant. "For my part, I don't see how it can be done."

"Nor do I, very distinctly; but there are more ways than one of taming a bull, and I'm sure we'll hit upon an expedient that will win. In the first place, we must change our course, and return to the road."

"Certainly—and I observe there is one circumstance in our favor."

"What is it?"

"Those troops encamped yonder show no signs of having been disturbed by my shot."

"That doesn't surprise me in the least. Probably the poor devils whom we wiped out were outpost pickets, and if so, it would be naturally supposed that it was one of them who fired the shot. You may rest assured, nobody will try to find out the cause of it, unless it be some of the other guards, and there may have been none in that immediate vicinity. But let us move on—we are wasting time."

Keeping an eye on the encampment below them, the spies turned to the left and moved cautiously along the edge of the cornfield, in a direction that would lead them out upon the road.

By studying the stars they were enabled to tell the hour, and saw that they had sufficient time in which to execute their plan and reach camp before daybreak, provided they were subjected to no long delays. The major had formed a little scheme which, if it proved successful, would soon place them within the walls of the city.

They were creeping along with the utmost caution, when the major, who was in advance, came to a halt and took a quick step backward, grasping his companion's arm with one hand, while with the other he pointed straight ahead.

"What now?" asked the startled lieutenant.

"Sh!—still as a mouse! Do you see that?"

They had approached within a dozen feet of the road, whose grayish color made it discernible in the darkness. In the middle of it was a man, with a gun on his shoulder, walking slowly up and down, with a firm, military step. That it was a man, was all that was made evident by a view of the dark figure, but it was easy to understand that he was a Mexican soldier on duty.

"A guard," whispered the lieutenant, as they both crouched down.

"A guard," returned Pefferton, "and we haven't the pass-word."

"Well, why do you stop here? All we have to do is to give him a wide berth, and strike the road below his beat."

"That would be escaping one difficulty to find ourselves surrounded by a score of others. I tell you, Fuller, unless we get that pass-word—or the help of some one else who has it—I fear we shall not be able to perform our mission at all."

"But how shall we get it?"

"By forcing it from somebody who possesses it—the man in front of us, for instance. The fact is, I was wishing we would find one of those fellows here. I'll tell you what I'm going to do: I'm going to pounce on this chap, and threaten him with death till he furnishes the desired information. You will stay here. I can do it alone. When you think it is time to follow, do so—but not until I have tackled him."

Before he could be questioned further, Major Pefferton left his companion's side, and was crawling away on all-fours.

Fuller watched him with breathless anxiety, as he receded through the bushes that skirted the roadside; and held himself in readiness to rush to his assistance, on the instant that such an act should be found necessary.

Pefferton disappeared, and all was silent as before. The soldier paced his beat like an image moved by machinery, thinking, perhaps, of what the morrow would bring forth, and sweetly ignorant of his present danger. Beyond him rose a black, frowning hill; and far above, on its summit, burned a solitary fire, blending its rufous light with the silvery gleam of the stars. A gentle breeze came whispering by—stopping just long enough to rustle the dry corn-blades, and agitate the feathery frondage of the tall palm-tree, before darting away again on its mysterious errand. Shriek-voiced insects added their dismal cries to the grave-like stillness that reigned, and made it all the more solemn and monotonous.

Half-crouching and half-standing, in his mingled eagerness and dread, Lieutenant Fuller waited for the reappearance of his friend. He knew the latter had acted prudently, in going forward alone, and only feared his adversary would prove more than a match for him.

The sentinel had just turned on his heel, at the end of his beat, and started back toward the other end, when Fuller's gaze rested upon something that he had not before seen. He dashed his hand across his eyes and looked again. It was true. There were two dark figures on the road now—two sentinels instead of one. He saw them moving along close together—the second one following behind the first. Where had this second one risen from so suddenly? Surely he had not been there before that moment. But,

stay! was it really another sentinel? Was it not? Hal! it is all clear now. The new figure is that of Major Pefferton. He had watched his chance, and slipped out of his concealment when the soldier's back was turned. He was creeping upon him with the stealthy tread of a cat, between the limits of the beat; showing that his vow had been no idle one. This discovery thrilled the beholder with the quivering pain of suspense. It was a critical moment.

The major paused—he was gathering for the spring. Now!—no—yes—hal! he launched himself into the air like a tiger and hurled his body with terrific force against that of the guard. There was a low cry, checked by the pressure of fingers on the throat whence it proceeded; and then followed a scuffle—fierce while it lasted, but of short duration—and both men fell to the ground, locked in a close embrace.

Recognizing this as the time for action, Fuller now bounded forward, and in a moment was on the scene of the conflict.

The Mexican was lying on his back—panting, bewildered, frightened. Pefferton was sitting astride of his body, pressing his throat with one hand, and with the other holding the muzzle of a revolver within an inch of his head; warning him, at the same time, that the slightest noise on his part would be accepted as a signal to put a bullet through his brain.

"Here, Fuller," said the major, as his friend came up; "you will find a ball of cord in my pocket. Take it, and tie this fellow, while I hold him in subjection."

Fuller thrust his hand into the major's pocket, and found the ball of cord alluded to. The captive made no resistance, and in a very short time was bound hand and foot.

"Now," said the major, in a low, distinct tone, addressing the Mexican in his own language, "you are in our power. We want to enter the city, and we can't without a knowledge of the countersign. If you will furnish us with what we require, you shall not be harmed; if you refuse, you're a dead dog! Do you hear? I'm in earnest. Speak quick! or you're food for the vultures—"

"Look!—look!" cried Fuller, at that moment. "What does that mean?"

He had chanced to direct his gaze up the road, and had seen a rocket shoot into the air. It seemed to rise from a point beyond that where they had slain the two Mexicans, and a streak of light marked its upward course. They watched it in silence until, high up in the sky, it burst with a faint report.

Before they could give expression to their wonder, it was increased by the sight of another rocket, that shot up from the town. The first was evidently a signal to the garrison; the second, its answer.

"What does it mean?" asked the lieutenant.

"I can't tell," returned the major, with an uneasy expression. "Probably some important personage is approaching, and thus gives notice of the fact to his friends. Hark!"

They listened; the sound of horses' hoofs was heard upon the road.

"A body of cavalry coming this way, as sure as you live!" cried the major, putting up his revolver, and half rising. Then, recollecting his captive, he looked down at him and said: "Once for all, you pepper-eating dog! Will you give us the watchword?"

But the sentinel's courage had returned with the removal of the pistol from his head, and the sound of approaching horsemen, and he shook his head resolutely. "Carramo!" he grunted: "you may shoot me a dozen times, but you'll gain no information from me!"

"Fuller—quick—give me your handkerchief. Never mind; I have one here. Now, you obstinate mule!"

Pefferton produced a large-sized handkerchief, and again fell upon the helpless man. Prying his mouth open, in no gentle manner, he stuffed the rag almost down his throat.

"That will induce you to economize your voice for awhile," he quietly remarked; "and may benefit us."

The two men now lifted their prisoner, and carried him several yards distant to a small gully. Into this they flung him, as if he were a bundle of merchandise, and there left him to the companionship of his reflections.

CHAPTER VI.

A RUSE AND A BODY-GUARD.

In less time than it has taken us to record the fact, the defeated guard had been put out of sight, and on the spot where he had paced his lonely beat a minute or two before, the disguised Americans now stood, conversing in low, hurried tones.

The hoof-beats of the approaching cavalcade were growing more distinct each second. A few moments and it would be in sight.

"What shall we do?" inquired Fuller.

"Whatever we do, we must be devilish spry about it," asserted the major, in his cool, careless way.

"Shall we hide until these fellows pass, and then make another attempt to draw the secret from our prisoner?"

"No; I have another plan. There is more danger in it than in the first, but a much better one if it succeeds. We'll leave our prisoner to study astronomy awhile in solitude, and, if we need, his assistance, will probably return to him. What I now propose is this: we will walk boldly up the road, and meet this party."

"Meet it?"

"To be sure. We'll put on a bold air, as though we counted on their aid as a matter of course. We'll talk Mexican to 'em by the yard, and it's my opinion they will be easily impressed with the belief that we are genuine vaqueros, and will permit us to accompany them."

"Good! Let us try it, by all means. We can no more than fail, though 'twill go hard with us if we do."

After hastily scrutinizing each other from head to foot, in order to ascertain if there was any thing in their appearance that would awaken suspicion, or contradict the story they intended to tell, they moved slowly up the road.

"This is evidently a small party," said Pefferton, as the sounds grew louder. "An escort, perhaps, or a scouting expedition."

"Or, what is just as likely," said the lieutenant, "the advance-guard of an army from Saltillo, marching to Monterey."

"Hardly that, I think. There isn't enough of them. But, whatever it is, we must present ourselves without the least fear or uneasiness. Leave the talking to me. This isn't the first time I have been in this garb, and I know how to adapt the tongue to the class of men we represent. Keep still till you find it absolutely necessary to speak, and then try to avoid a foreign accent in your enunciation. If we are detected, wait till I give the signal; then take to your heels. Whatever happens, don't forget your part. Don't allow yourself to be betrayed into speaking your own language."

Just then the horsemen came in view, looming up darkly through the shadows, one after another. They were riding at a walk, and were conversing freely among themselves.

"Be cool, now," admonished the major, in a whisper, addressing the caution to himself as much as to his companion.

They advanced fearlessly to meet the mounted soldiers.

In a moment they were spied, and a clear, ringing voice cried out:

"Alto!"

Reins were tightened with a jerk; fiery steeds pranced with alarm at the sudden restraint; one or two exclamations of surprise were uttered, and the cavalcade stood still.

Then came the challenge:

"Quien vive?"

"Amigos," promptly responded Pefferton; and the two walked forward without a sign of hesitancy, stopping in the very midst of their fierce-looking enemies. The latter numbered some thirteen or fourteen men, and, as the scouts had surmised, they were a small detachment of Mexican cavalry. Their long lances, their flashy uniforms, their richly-caparisoned steeds, and the language they spoke, all bore testimony to this fact.

The leader of the party was a splendid-looking officer; tall, handsome, graceful. His plumed helmet, his golden epaulettes, and his spangled dress could not have seemed more in place on him had he been created especially for the rank they betokened. A black mustache graced his upper-lip, beneath which gleamed a set of pearly-white teeth whenever their owner deigned to smile; and even in the darkness it could be seen that his features were finely-cut and regular. A better light would have revealed a sinister countenance, whose expression of low, vindictive cunning was hardly in keeping with the soldierly bearing of the man.

His followers were not his counterparts. While they displayed in their faces, actions and attitudes the peculiarities of the native Mexican, there was something singularly foreign about him—showing itself not only in his complexion, but also in his speech and general deportment.

He took but little notice of the two herdsmen whom they met. At first he eyed them somewhat curiously, but their dress appeared to sat-

isfy him. Pefferton began to inform him that they were vaqueros from a neighboring *ganada*, or cattle-farm, and desired to take refuge in the city until the murderous Americans should be driven from the soil, when the officer suddenly interrupted him with an impatient exclamation:

"If that is all," said he, "fall in here beside us, and keep pace with our animals. We'll take you safely within the walls, and see that you are armed for the coming fight. *Ade-lante!*"

The spies were astonished. They had undertaken this trick with considerable confidence in their ability to perform it successfully, but they had fully made up their minds to encounter some grave doubts, and submit to an almost endless detention of cross-questioning before finally gaining their point. They could scarcely conceal their joy, as they exchanged glances; but they waited not for a second bidding to "fall in" beside their escort, which now moved forward again. It was with peculiar sensations that they saw every obstacle swept away, and realized that they would soon be within the beleaguered city surrounded by thousands of their deadly foes.

The calvalcade moved slowly down the road, accommodating its pace to that of the leather-clad footman who had claimed its protection. All booted and spurred, and armed *cap-a-pie*, with their clanking sabers, pennoned spears, prancing horses and gay trappings—the group of lanciers presented a picturesque and truly military appearance.

From remarks that passed between them, it was learned that they had been to Saltillo to procure supplies, and that an *atajo*—a train of pack-mules—was coming about a mile behind, well-loaded and strongly guarded. The two herdsmen, though pretending to hear nothing, kept their ears open in order to secure every thing of importance that might fall from the lips of the unsuspecting horsemen; and their close attention was not without its reward.

As they passed the spot where the picket had been surprised and bound, Major Pefferton distinctly heard a groan from the gully into which the helpless man had been thrown. But, fortunately, the soldiers were all in animated conversation at the moment; and that, with the noise made by their horses, prevented them from hearing the sound.

We say Major Pefferton heard it. Fuller did not, for his mind was engrossed by something else. He was regarding the leader of the party with an earnest, steadfast gaze, as if some irresistible attraction chained his attention. That such should be the case, under existing circumstances, may seem singular—inasmuch as his friend is not similarly affected—but a word of explanation will clear that point, though it may introduce something far more singular. Indeed, it was wonderful—positively marvelous—as he thought.

At sight of the handsome cavalry officer, Fuller's first impression was, that he was in the presence of one whom he had often seen before. The feeling grew on him rapidly, till he was ready to take an oath to that effect! The form—the voice—the carriage—the indistinct contour of the features—all reminded him strangely of the past; of somebody whom he had seen—known—been familiar with, in years gone by. Who it was, and where he had met him, he racked his brain in vain to determine. Surely, it could be no fancy—nor yet one of those remarkable coincidences by which people are sometimes deceived. It must be real. He could scarcely entertain a doubt that he had been intimately acquainted with this person at one time of his life; though at what time, he could not recollect. And yet, whom had he ever known in Mexico?

Nobody. But what of that? He had already decided that this man was not a Mexican. In fact, it had become evident that he was not; for although he talked to his followers in the Spano-Mexican tongue, and used it quite fluently, yet his conversation was interlarded with epithets and interjections culled from the English language. No doubt, he was a renegade American—and one with whom he had associated before the war. But who? That was the question; and a distracting one it was fast becoming. Several times, as some familiar expression fell upon the lieutenant's ear, his heart gave a sudden leap, and he felt that he had almost recognized the speaker. But, as many times, the glow slipped from his grasp, and he was left as much in doubt as before.

He believed the advantage of a little light was all that was required to lead to instant recognition. The flash of a fire-fly, or a spark from a

flint—where its beam would fall upon those features—and he felt that his memory would need no further refreshing. He had a strong hope that such an advantage would be granted him, before he was compelled to part company with the man; but in this he was doomed to disappointment.

They entered the city. At the point where they passed its confines the darkness was as thick as it was in the country beyond.

They were no sooner within the limits of the town than Major Pefferton, dropping behind the heedless horse-guards, plucked Fuller's sleeve, and whispered that the time had come for them to take leave of their new friends. Turning aside abruptly, they darted into a narrow alley-way without being seen, and followed it until they came out upon another street.

CHAPTER VII.

A BOLD MOVE.

MONTEREY is pleasantly and healthily situated in a region that is not only grand in point of scenery, but rich in a large variety of tropical productions. Embosomed in mountains—a spur of the Sierra del Madre—and embracing within its walls a fine rural prospect, interspersed with groves, gardens, and beautiful lanes, it is a delightful and romantic place for country residences. For this reason, more than one wealthy *hidalgo*, or aristocratic scion of Mexico's *sangre azul*, have erected magnificent country seats there; and, in the "piping times of peace," a spot more attractive, salubrious and fruitful is not to be found in the *tierras templadas*.

But, at the period of which we write, the whole city had been transformed into one vast fortress, as it were. Every house was provided with conveniences for infantry defense; every parapet and garden wall was loop-holed for musketry, and piled high with sand-bags for the better protection of the troops. Streets were barricaded with heavy works of masonry, furnished with embrasures for guns, and apparently impervious to any sort of shot that might be hurled against them; while the east half of the city, commanding the approach of the American forces, was one mass of fortifications. From the center to the outer extremity, strong redoubts rose one above the other, in numbers and strength that seemed to laugh at the threatened assault.

After taking leave of their escort, the two spies glided from one street to another in silent haste, until, finding themselves in a thickly populated part of the town, they stopped on a corner to take breath.

The citizens had mostly retired, as it seemed; but wherever the eye strayed, soldiers could be seen moving about, singly and in groups—some hurrying, some sauntering, and all glittering in the gaud and tinsel of full uniforms. Patrols were encountered at every turn. One of these half halted to look at the strange herdsmen as he passed, but strode on without speaking. All around them were dark, square-shaped buildings, displaying, in their aspect of venerable antiquity, a peculiarity of Moorish architecture; while up against the starry sky was outlined the steeple of the great cathedral, marking the locality of the *Grand Plaza*.

Somewhere in the vicinity was heard the soft notes of a *bandolon*, accompanied by the sharp click of the "gay castanet;" showing that there were still merry hearts in the town, despite the menacing storm that was ready to burst about its walls.

"Come," said the major, shortly after they had stopped, "let us not wait here until that patrol returns. He looks at us too closely."

"Where shall we go?" asked the lieutenant.

"To the house of the Salamancas," was the reply. "We won't stop to pick up any more information for the general. What we gathered from the conversation of those cavalry fellows—taken with what we have seen—is quite enough. We'll proceed at once to hunt up the old Don and his family. Or, if you would rather, you may go back to camp with the news, and I will undertake the other work alone."

"Not if I know myself," said Fuller, firmly. "I came with you of my own free will, and shall not go back until you do—or, at least, not until I have seen to a certainty that I can benefit you more by going than by staying. I hope you understand me, major."

"Spoken like you, my dear lieutenant! I was a fool to make such a proposition. With that assurance, let us waste no more time."

"Do you know where to go?"

"Oh, certainly. If my charmer is in the town, I'll find her. Come with me."

Sauntering carelessly along, they entered a street that was lined with fashionable resi-

dences. They kept an eye about them without seeming to do so, and, to all appearances, were a couple of idle fellows, wandering aimlessly around the town.

In this manner they had proceeded some distance when they were met by a man coming from the opposite direction. He took no notice of them as he passed, but Major Pefferton gave a slight start, and stopped to look after him.

"Look!" he exclaimed, in a sharp whisper.

"What's the matter?" asked Fuller, looking as he was directed.

At that moment the man was passing under a street lamp, which shed its full light upon him. He was a tall gentleman, of dignified bearing, with short gray hair, and heavy, grizzled mustache. He wore a broad-brimmed hat, encircled by a band of gold bullion, with tags of the same material. His limbs were cased in a wine-colored *calzoneros* of the finest fabric, adorned by rows of glittering buttons molded from some precious metal, and flaring open at the bottoms over a pair of red morocco boots. A sash of scarlet silk girded his waist, and a bright purple *manga* dropped in graceful folds from his shoulders.

Though his dress was purely Mexican, there was that in his fine face and haughty mien suggestive of Spanish nobility.

"What's the matter?" repeated Fuller, when the man was beyond hearing.

"I merely wanted you to look at him," replied Pefferton.

"I saw nothing very extraordinary in his appearance."

"But don't you think he would make a very respectable father-in-law?"

"Ah! is that the gentleman?"

"That is Don Estavan de Salamanca, father of the angel whose picture I carry. He's a genuine *hidalgo*, and far more intelligent than the majority of the chile-eating Arabs around him. This proves that he has not left the city, at any rate. I wonder where the deuce he is going at this hour of the night? I'm glad he left home before we got there, for I had some misgivings about meeting the old gentleman before finding out that he is friendly to our side of the question. Let us hurry on, and see the ladies before he returns."

"Probably Don Estevan has sent his family away from home?"

"We will soon learn whether he has or not."

And they moved on, more rapidly than before. Nobody was stirring on this street. The only person they saw was a solitary sentry, wrapped in a great-coat, and apparently more asleep than awake. He scarcely looked at them, and they went on their way unhindered.

Presently they stopped near a large house, built of white stone, with ornamental columns and cornices. The general appearance of this structure proclaimed it the habitation of a person of rank. Around it was a garden, lined with orange-trees; in front were arching portals, with a ponderous center-door, marking the main entrance.

"This is the house," whispered Pefferton. "Keep close to me, and if I enter, follow me in, without waiting for further instructions."

"I understand," replied Fuller, calmly.

They approached the great door, and Major Pefferton knocked noisily.

"Quien?" demanded the porter, on the other side.

"Yo!" responded the major.

That was all. Indefinite as was the answer, given to the point-blank inquiry of the porter, it had the desired effect. A chain rattled, a bolt shot backward, and the door slowly opened.

A man appeared within the *saguan*, rubbing his eyes sleepily.

"Buenas noches," said the major, good-naturedly. "Do you know whether Donna Francisca has retired or not?"

The man stared at him without replying. Pefferton took no notice of his surprised look, but coolly glanced up at the house in search of an answer from some other source. The upper rooms were evidently darkened, but he perceived with joy that a strong light was shining upon the rose-colored curtains of the lower windows. This would have decided him that the inmates were still up, but, added to it, was sweeter and more satisfactory evidence. The faint music of a guitar was heard within, and a voice, sweet as a dream of angel melody, was singing a tender love-song.

That told him what he wanted to know. Even Fuller held his breath to listen; but the effect upon the major was different. His heart bounded like an ungovernable war-horse, and the blood coursed through his veins like streams

of burning lava. Hiding his emotion, however, he dropped his gaze to the porter, and repeated his interrogatory with an expression of stern authority, that caused that individual to start.

"She has not retired," was the stammering reply; "but she is all alone, and cannot receive company."

"Alone! Is not her mother with her?"

"Her mother has been absent all day, nursing a sick friend in a distant part of the town. Master has gone after her, to bring her home. He started but a minute ago; possibly you met him?"

"Aha! The old senora is away, also," said the major, half-musingly. "That is better than I expected."

"Senores will come again in the morning," said the porter. "The family will then be at home."

"Bah! we will do no such thing," returned the major. "If the young lady is alone, so much the better. We have a message for her, and must be admitted. Stand aside—fool! We won't trouble you to announce us. Time is precious."

"He thrust the man rudely out of the way, and ran up the broad steps, closely followed by Fuller.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MEXICAN DRAWING-ROOM.

THEY were more than half-afraid that the porter would show his disrobation of this bold maneuver by raising a disturbance; but, as they glanced back, they saw him standing in the *aguan*, looking after them in dumb amazement.

Without the slightest hesitation, the intruders entered the house, and found themselves in a hall brilliantly lighted. It was a spacious apartment, with a high ceiling gracefully arched, and a floor paved with elegant mosaic. The walls were finished with elaborate stucco-work, tinted and polished, and hung with rare paintings from the pencils of old Spanish masters. Two saintly images stared stoically at each other, from their respective niches on opposite sides of the hall. Tall vases handsomely carved and gilded, and filled with flowers both natural and artificial, were to be seen on every hand; while up above, suspended from the ceiling, was a large chandelier of quaint and costly construction, all ablaze with wax candles.

The spies paused, uncertain how to proceed. The music had ceased—the sweet voice of the singer was hushed—and all was still. They had made noise enough on entering—no doubt the musician had stopped to listen, and was probably alarmed by the unusual sounds.

The porter held his peace as well as they could have wished. Likely he was not satisfied in his own mind that they were anything but harmless friends of the family, on some important errand, and was waiting for further developments.

While yet they were looking about them in a hesitating manner, a door on one side of the hall was cautiously opened, and a lady appeared in the gap. The sight of her deprived both men for a moment, of the power of action. She seemed a vision—a glorious hallucination—the wild creation of a delirious brain—rather than a real earthly being. Pefferton had seen her before—Fuller never had; but in the bewildering beauty of that face, he recognized the original of the picture he had viewed that afternoon. The artist had not flattered her; no artist could. Paint could but feebly represent the transcendent loveliness in which nature had clothed her.

At sight of the two strangers standing there in the hall, an expression that betokened both amazement and alarm swept across the lady's features. She made a quick movement, as if she would retreat and close the door, but Pefferton recovered his self-possession in time to restrain her.

"Ah, senorita!" said he, as he lifted his hat and executed a profound bow; "pray do not be frightened. We are friends, I assure you. We mean no harm, but wish to do you a kindness!"

She hesitated, and looked curiously at the speaker.

"Believe me, senorita; I am not deceiving you," continued the major, in his most earnest tones. "We are here to befriend you. Our appearance may give you a different impression: but what I tell you is true. Our attire, perhaps, is not just the thing for fashionable society—"

He paused. The lady had started, and uttered a low scream.

"Senorita, I beg your pardon—"

"Santissima Virgin!" she exclaimed, inter-

rupting him. "Can I be mistaken? The voice—the features—all the same! Is it—is it—ah!"

She dropped her eyes, and blushed painfully, as if her sudden agitation had led her to say more than she deemed proper.

The major's countenance brightened. With his hat still off and his features exposed to the glaring light, he stepped nimbly forward and stood close to the blushing beauty.

"Donna Francisca," he said in a low tone, "am I recognized?"

She looked up. Their eyes met in a gaze whose import was not concealed. It expressed mutual tenderness.

"I see that I am," he added.

"You are—you are!" she murmured and her heaving bosom, together with the varied expressions that chased one another over her beautiful face, told of contending emotions.

Lieutenant Fuller became strangely unobtrusive, all at once, and retiring to the other side of the hall, was immediately absorbed in the examination of a vase of waxen flowers.

"Fair lady," said the major, bending over till his warm breath played upon her damask cheek, "knowing what you know, it would be useless for me to tell you how much pleasure I derive from being permitted once more to look upon your sweet face. Pardon me—I can not help being candid. Though we never exchanged words until to-night, I feel as though we had long been acquainted. Your recognition of me makes my happiness complete. It is a pleasant assurance that I was not entirely unnoticed by you while I lived in Monterey."

He drew from his bosom her likeness, and held it out before her.

"Francisca, can you tell me how I came by this?"

Her eyes flashed, as if with a sudden joy.

"You kept it, then?" she whispered.

"Kept it!" he echoed. "It is a treasure more precious than anything else I possess. I only feared that it was not designed for me."

"It was the last time I saw you," she proceeded, still trembling with emotion. "'Twas at the fandango—in the *salon de baile*—I left the picture where I had been sitting, and—and—"

"And something else with it," said the major, promptly. "Here it is." He produced the sprig of *tuya*, carefully wrapped up in a small piece of paper. "Another treasure jealously preserved. Tell me, Francisca; was this intended for an answer to the note I dropped in your lap?"

This was asked eagerly—impetuously. But it was not answered. As if she had not heard his question, the young lady glanced up and down the *sala*, and then spoke up quickly, saying:

"Perdonar, señor; you said your business was with me. It will not be well for the servants to see you. Please come into this room. Bring your friend."

As she gave the invitation, she stepped back and held the door open, making a hurried gesture, as if sensible that no time was to be lost.

Pefferton and Fuller did not wait for a second bidding, but walked into the drawing-room at once. It was a handsome apartment. The magnificence of the scene that burst upon their gaze was like the dazzling splendor of some enchanted palace, while the furniture was rich enough to fire the fancy of the most luxurious Sybarite. Soft carpet yielded to the pressure of their feet; full-length mirrors reflected their forms in whichever direction they looked; tall girandoles, and polished candelabras, stood on marble tables, holding burning tapers in their branches; and a variety of brilliant objects bewildered their eyes as they glanced at their surroundings.

But every thing was tame compared with the animate beauty of their young hostess, who now stood before them like a queen in her realm. Pefferton took occasion to introduce his companion.

"Permit me, senorita—this is my brave and valued friend, Lieutenant Fuller, of the U. S. A."

The introduction was gracefully acknowledged by both parties.

"Un Americano?" said the lady, in some surprise.

"Oh, certainly," replied the major, quietly. "My friend is an American, like myself."

The lady gave a sudden start, and clasped her hands. Her large, luminous orbs scanned alternately the faces of the two men, and the color seemed gradually fading from her cheeks.

"Madre de Dios!" she exclaimed, with a look of the deepest anxiety. "You would not tell me—but no! it can not be. It would be madness—almost certain death—for an enemy to attempt—"

"I understand you," interrupted the major, with a smile. "Your conception is correct. We do belong to the American army now lying outside of this city."

"And you have ventured to come here at such a time?" said Donna Francisca, with an expression of real terror. "Ay de mi! you will be killed. You will certainly be arrested, and I have heard that any enemy found within our lines will be compelled to suffer the punishment of a spy, which you know is death. Go back at once! Por amor Dios! don't tarry here. It is folly—madness! You are not sensible of your peril. Anda—anda! If you value my friendship, go quickly!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLAN FAILS.

DONNA FRANCISCA was a picture of genuine distress. Her embarrassment—which hitherto had been manifested by her manner, and the crimson tide surging restlessly beneath the wax-like surface of her skin—had vanished in a breath.

She seemed to lose sight of her own situation, and to think only of the peril attending the enterprise of the two daring men.

"Compose yourself, Francisca," said the major, entreatingly. "Indeed we are aware of our danger, but have made this venture in discharge of our duty. We are spies, truly, but well disguised. Our entrance into the city has been performed safely, and we think our withdrawal may be accomplished with comparatively little difficulty. In your presence, perhaps, we are not over discreet, but we intend to show ourselves to no one else under so strong a light."

"But it was a reckless act to enter my father's house in this manner," said the young lady, more calmly.

"Not so reckless as you imagine, I dare say," returned the major. "We knew you were alone. We knew your mother had been spending the day and evening with a sick friend, in another part of the town, and that your father had gone to bring her home."

"You knew this? How did you learn?"

"We met your father as we came along. The porter gave us the facts. But you wish to know why we are here! Francisca, I will tell you."

"Pray be brief. Papa will come back soon. He must not find you here."

"Must not! Then he is not friendly to our cause?"

"No—not is he a very enthusiastic enemy to it. He has no interest in the affair, but I fear his coming home and finding two United States officers in his house, would lead to bad results."

"Do you know what he thinks of the coming battle?"

"He is firm in his belief that the Mexicans will win."

"I am sorry. That interferes with our plans. However, we will not give up at this. Donna Francisca, you are in danger, and it is the mission of myself and friend to release you from it."

The wondrous black eyes opened to their widest extent.

"Listen," continued the major, almost choking in his earnestness. "Our army is not large, but it has already found out that no Mexican power can defeat it, and I venture to say it will be in possession of Monterey before the expiration of a week. Our commander designs beginning operations at once, and although he does not mean to make war with peaceful citizens, yet, in case of a bombardment, you cannot help understanding that the lives of women and children will be in danger. Your father has undoubtedly done wrong in keeping his family here. As a neutral, he ought to have left the city, to return only upon the restoration of peace in this quarter."

"Mamma begged him to do that," said the Donna, "but he turned a deaf ear to her entreaties. He told her it was useless; that the Americans could do no harm to a stronghold such as this; and he really believes your troops will withdraw without making the threatened attack."

"He will see his mistake when it is too late, I'm afraid. Our past triumphs should be a warning to him. But if he is obstinate enough to remain here in defiance of the risk, he certainly has no right to make you share the danger to which he foolishly exposes himself. Sweet lady, come with us! Leave your parents for a little while, and resign yourself to our protection. Let us take you to a place of security, until this horrible battle is over—"

He was interrupted by an exclamation. Donna Francisca was staring at him with an

Tippy, the Texan.

expression of blended surprise and protestation.

"No, no—don't refuse!" and Major Pefferton half-unconsciously grasped one of her white, jeweled hands. "I am not insane. There is nothing so very unreasonable in my request."

"I can not," she cried, huskily. "What made you think of such a thing? *Ay de mi!* it would be a rash act to desert my parents and go off with a stranger—a stranger to them, if not to me."

"It will be only for a little while," persisted the major. "We'll restore you to them when the danger is over. We are strangers, it is true, and Texans, besides; but we promise that your father will be anything but angry when all is over. It is not your duty to regard his wishes, when convinced that they are wrong, and your own personal safety is concerned. Trust me, and come! Darling, darling, I love you!"

He suddenly dropped his voice to a whisper, and uttered that declaration—low, passionate, abrupt. Her eyes quivered and fell; her hand quivered in his; the rich color suffused her cheeks, and glowed like a summer sunset on her brow and temples.

It was over in a moment. She met his gaze calmly and steadily, and said to him in a voice that was gentle but firm:

"No, you must not ask it. I will stay with papa and mamma. Since they will not be safe, I care not to. Leave me now—please leave me—don't waste a moment, for time is precious to you. I'm afraid I did wrong in permitting this interview. I can never thank you sufficiently for the risk you have so gallantly incurred in my behalf; but go—go—and I will pray for you. I will ask God to guide you back to your friends unharmed."

The major bit his lip with disappointment. He knew her decision was final, and that it would be useless to urge her further. He realized, also, that she was right when she told him time was precious, for her words had shown him that Don Estevan's return, at that particular point of time, would jeopardize the lives of himself and friend. Still, he hesitated. Though disappointed he was happy; and it was hard to tear himself away. In plain-spoken words he had openly avowed to this beautiful creature what he had previously acknowledged through the medium of a pencil, and there was something in her unuttered reply more eloquent and charming than any form of speech could have made it. She loved him. He felt it—saw it.

"Francisca," he said, after a pause, "at your solicitation I go, but I must bear away a promise that this shall not be our last meeting. Many days will not have elapsed ere the blue-coated soldiers from the north will walk the streets of Monterey with impunity. Then I may come to see you again, darling?"

"Yes, yes; in that case you must come often. Papa will be more friendly to your cause if you are victors in this struggle."

At this juncture, Lieutenant Fuller approached rapidly from the other end of the drawing-room, whither he had quietly retired to give the major and the lady an opportunity to converse on whatever subject their fancy might select, without that restriction which delicacy sometimes enjoins in the presence of a third party.

He held something in his hand, and it was observed that he was quite pale and agitated.

"Senorita—pardon the intrusion—will you be kind enough to tell me whose portrait this is?"

He said it respectfully—politely—but his voice was not steady, and its tone surprised them. He had a small picture, with a gold frame, which he had found on one of the tables while wandering about the room. He handed it to Donna Francisca as he spoke, and looked eagerly at her as he waited for the answer.

She glanced at it, and then gazed wonderingly at the lieutenant.

"This," she replied, "is the portrait of Captain La Vietro. He is a friend of my father's."

Fuller looked perplexed. Evidently the name was not the one he had expected to hear.

"Pardon," he said, with smile. "It was a mistake. The face is very like one I have seen, but the name is new to me."

Major Pefferton took the picture and looked at it. A youngish man, in military dress, with handsome features and a dark mustache, looked back at him from the canvas. The face was purely Saxon in its mold. The major's eyes had scarcely alighted upon it when he gave a tremendous start, and exclaimed:

"By Jove! are you sure you are not mistaken, senorita? This man is not a Mexican!"

"No," quietly responded the lady.

"He's an American!" added the major.

"Yes," was the calm reply.

"And the very one who danced with you at the fandango on that memorable night," declared the major, emphatically. "It was he who led you away, when you left the miniature on the seat."

"Senor has a good memory," answered the lady, with a smile.

"Love and jealousy never forget their object," laughed Pefferton. "But is this fellow really a captain in the Mexican army?"

"Yes; and he fights like a tiger, they say."

"Curse him for a traitor! I should like to meet him in battle."

"If he is one of our own countrymen," suggested Fuller, "I think it rather strange that he should bear the name of La Vietro?"

"It is not his real name," said Donna Francisca.

"Indeed! What is his real name?"

"I do not know. That is a secret which he reveals to none. He told papa that a certain episode in his life had given him ample grounds for discarding his family name, and turning his back on his native land forever."

"Then, by heaven, it is he!" ejaculated the lieutenant.

"Who?" asked Pefferton and the lady in a breath.

But Fuller did not enlighten them. He suddenly became confused instead, and stammered and looked down at the floor; while his face, which had been pale with excitement, flushed to the roots of his hair. They gazed at him in voiceless amazement.

The silence lasted but a moment, though broken by no one in the room. A quick footstep sounded in the *ante-sala*; the drawing-room door was hurled open without ceremony, and the porter appeared before the astonished group, exclaiming, in terrified accents:

"*Por Dios!* senorita, there is something the matter. These men must be enemies! There are people outside—soldiers armed—*muchissimos*!"

And he vanished as suddenly as he had appeared.

CHAPTER X.

A LEAP WITHOUT THE LOOK.

HAD a bomb burst in their midst, it could not have startled the trio more than that abrupt declaration from the porter. Not one of them failed to understand it—its full significance rushed upon them simultaneously with the jumbled utterance of the words.

Donna Francisca turned deadly pale.

"*Dios de mi alma!*" she gasped. "You are lost! you are lost! There are soldiers outside! You are detected, and they have come to seize you. Hark!"

A sound of voices came from the pavement without—a confused jangling of orders and interjections, presenting unpleasant ideas of a mob.

"Oh! what shall we do?" cried the girl, wringing her hands in anguish. "They are coming in—they will certainly kill you!"

"Don't give way so, darling," pleaded Pefferton, close to her ear. "They will not dare to harm you."

"But you!" she cried, wildly. "They will murder you!"

"Senorita need not fear for us," said Lieutenant Fuller, calmly. "We only regret that we have involved her."

A sharp exclamation burst from Donna Francisca's lips.

"Hold!—stay!—there is one chance for you to escape! Come, quick! *Madre de Dios!* Hasten!"

She glided between the two men, grasped an arm of each, and almost dragged them down the drawing-room to the lower end. Unmindful of their bewilderment she stopped here, threw open a door disclosing nothing but darkness beyond it, and said, in a rapid whisper:

"Into this room—quick! for your lives! Run through it to the passage on the side—from there into the *cocina*—you will find a door opening into the garden in the rear of the house. *Anda—anda!* save yourselves! I hear my father's voice—I hear footsteps in the hall. Oh! what is the name of mercy—"

The door slammed, and the two spies were in total darkness.

For an instant they stood immovable, listening to the clamor of voices and the tramp of feet, that reached their ears with a muffled sound through the thick walls. Then, instinctively, they grasped each other's hand, and hurried across the room to the door on the opposite side. It was shut, but they easily opened it and entered a dark, narrow passage. They groped their way through this in headlong haste. A few

yards further on they emerged into another wide room. This was the kitchen, and was dimly lighted. A servant was here—a huge negress, who stood directly in their path and threw up both arms with a terrific shriek as they entered. But they pushed her rudely aside, and rushed past. Reaching the back door, they jerked it open and dashed out of the *cocina* hand in hand.

The cool air blew in their faces—stars gleamed in the black waste above—they were outside of the house.

Bounding across a paved court, they went stumbling forward till they found themselves in the garden, among flowers and fruits of many descriptions. They paused a moment, and looked keenly about in search of a place to make their exit. In that moment their blood suddenly froze in their veins, and their hearts stood still. A dozen forms dropped from the high stone wall in front of them; shadowy figures appeared among the orange trees; and before they could retreat a step, or defend themselves, they were both hurled upon their backs, and bound hand and foot!

Men were moving about them—fierce-looking men, with drawn swords that glittered unpleasantly in the darkness. Voices laughed and cursed, and kept up an incessant jargon in Mexican-Spanish, while grim faces were thrust down close to those of the captives, which they scanned with curious eyes. Several times they were kicked on the ribs with booted feet, and each time the act was accompanied by a taunting speech, or a burst of mocking laughter.

Then other soldiers came pouring out of the house, and joined those who had secured the prisoners. A voice that sounded strangely familiar to the ears of the two Americans, uttered an oath in the English language as its owner approached. A form came and stood over them—a tall, manly form, replete with natural grace and beauty, decked in the costume of a cavalry officer. Addressing the prostrate men in their own tongue, the new-comer cried out:

"Hallo, gentlemen! this is rather an undignified position for a couple of United States soldiers. Ha! ha! did you think to escape by running out here? Did you think the house was not surrounded? When you undertake that again, just recollect that Captain La Vietro is not a Mexican, and consequently is no fool. A fine pair of vaqueros, truly!" added the man, with a derisive laugh.

They recognized him now. Although they could not see his face, here was the voice, the figure, and the equipments to prove that he was no other than the leader of the little cavalcade that had escorted them through the enemy's lines scarcely more than an hour ago!

"You're a clever pair, I'm bound to acknowledge," pursued the officer with a sneer, "but you're not sharp enough to pull the wool over my eyes. I had my suspicions when we met you on the road, but I kept them to myself until you were safely decoyed into the town. Curse me! that idiotic commander who was unfeeling enough to send you hither, will never be permitted to make tools of you again to shape his vicious ends. When he next meets you, it will be in heaven. Ha! ha! Why don't you speak, you groveling bounds?"

But they did not choose to speak. Understanding that his dire insinuations were uttered for no other purpose than to make them beg for mercy, and knowing they could not better their condition by replying to his taunts one way or another, they prudently held their tongues, and showed him that his pointed words were all lost upon them. Their silence chafed the ruffian more than anything they could have said, and giving them each a couple of kicks, he turned away.

"Caspita!" he said, addressing his followers; "these dogs are frightened out of the use of their tongues. Can you blame me for deserting my own country to fight for yours?"

"No! no!" was the general response, and a coarse laugh burst from the soldiers, which seemed to please their captain infinitely.

"Ho there; Santiago! Miguel! Pedrol—half a dozen of you carry these *pelados* in to the light. Carrambo! I've a curiosity to see the faces of the precious pair."

A number of men sprung forward to do the bidding of their captain, and the prisoners were lifted from the ground in no gentle manner, and borne into the house.

CHAPTER XI.

A MUTUAL RECOGNITION.

It came so suddenly, and occurred in so short a space of time, that the bewildered spies did not fully realize the extent of their misfortune until they found themselves lying on the carpet

of the drawing-room, half stunned by the rough handling they had undergone.

Then it all came to them. They comprehended their situation; remembered that they were spies arrested within the enemy's lines; and knew that death, inglorious and horrible, was already staring them in the face. They could not hope to escape. In proverbial phraseology, they had made their bed, and must lie in it.

Under the broad glare of light that illuminated this part of the house, they saw that the drawing-room and *anti-sala* were full of Mexican soldiers, talking, laughing, smoking, and drinking Don Estevan's wine. Don Estevan himself was not far away, in conversation with the officer who commanded the party. They both looked at the prisoners while they talked; the Spaniard seemed perplexed, and scowled darkly, but the officer displayed his pearly teeth in a smile of heartless triumph. Donna Francisca and her mother had both been present when the spies were brought in, but the old lady had immediately led her daughter out of the room, and neither of them returned while the mob remained.

Though the cords cut their wrists and kept them in constant pain, the defeated Americans lay passively side by side on the floor, without so much as an expression to show how they were tortured. From stray bits of conversation that came to their ears from the many talkers around them, they gathered the facts that had led to their capture. In spite of the handsome captain's boast that they were not clever enough to deceive him, it appeared that they did not owe their detection to him by any means. He had not thought of suspecting them until he had received orders to hunt them down, and even then had evinced an inclination to laugh at the idea of those two men being other than genuine *vaqueros*.

The fate of the incognitos had been sealed by the solitary sentinel, whom they had surprised and overthrown on the road. He had managed to free himself from the cords that bound his limbs, and crawling from the gully, into which he had been so hastily thrown on the approach of the cavalcade, had proceeded at once to make known what had occurred. Of course, the news that there were spies in the town had spread like wildfire, and as the cavalry officer was the person to recognize them—having already been in their company—he had been detailed with a detachment of his own men to search the city. He had traced the pseudo-herdsman to Salamanca's house with little difficulty, arriving there almost simultaneously with Don Estevan and his wife, and cutting off the retreat of the inmates before the alarm could be given.

All this they learned as they lay there in their painful captivity, and it was enough to explain their present situation. The clinking of glasses, the brutal jests, and the noisy laughter that filled the room did not serve to lighten the burden of their torture, and they began to wish most heartily for a change of position. They began to wonder, also, how and when they would be punished. Whether they would be put to death by means of the gallows or the *garrote*; and whether it would take place before or after the battle?

Their reflections were cut short by the Mexican officer, who, up to this time, had been retained in another part of the room by the host. He was now heard to say:

"Hold! I must take a closer view of the birds we have caged. Excuse me a moment, Don Estevan. Perhaps I have met these gentlemen before. *Quién sabe?*"

With that, he left Don Estevan's side, and approached the captives.

"Well, my helpless innocents, how do you feel by this time?" he began, with an air of insolent braggadocio. "Happy, I presume? There is nothing pleasanter than thoughts of the future at such a time as this, especially when one has hopes of heaven. Brave men smiling at death—Ha! *Por todos santos!* What do I see!"

He had stopped beside the captives, and bent down to scan their features while he spoke. His eyes had passed from Major Pefferton to Lieutenant Fuller, and then it was that the cry burst from his lips, and he staggered back with a pallid face.

"My God! You here!" he gasped, in a hoarse whisper.

Fuller did not reply; he seemed turned into stone. His bloodless lips were closed tightly over his teeth, and his blazing eyes were fastened upon the officer with a cold, steady gaze.

The latter recoiled with a deprecating gesture, as if warding off a blow. He did not utter a word now, but seemed utterly speechless before those accusing eyes. He began to move back-

ward—slowly, step by step, in a cringing, cowardly manner, that left no trace of his recent swaggering air, and did not pause until he was hidden from view in the crowd.

His singular conduct astonished the soldiers, a number of whom gathered around him and asked if he were ill. Some one declared he was going to faint, and called for water. Don Estevan told them to give him air and a glass of brandy. The latter order was executed in a trice, and a moment after he had swallowed the liquor, the captain broke into a hollow laugh, and said:

"It's nothing—don't be alarmed. *Vaya!* do you think I am one of the fainting sort? Not I! Something familiar in the features of that cub lying there reminded me unpleasantly of the past; that's all. Here, men," he cried, in a tone of stern authority; "up with those white-livered hounds, and take them to the guard-house. *Carajo!* we'll see who wins this game! Don Estevan, adios! Thanks for your hospitality."

He did not again show himself to the prisoners. Several men leaped to do his bidding, and after removing the cords from the ankles of the spies, jerked them upon their feet. The main body of the captors went out first; the spies and their guard brought up the rear.

In the hall the rear party came to a halt. These men had left their guns in the drawing-room, and they now went back after them, leaving but one man with the captives. The party in the lead was disappearing through the front door. The single soldier remaining in the hall, stood with his back to the prisoners, looking into the drawing-room, and telling his friends where to find his gun. It was only a moment, but a moment when no eyes were on the watch. It seemed to have been brought about by a special providence, for the safe execution of the little drama that was enacted within it. A voice whispered softly in Major Pefferton's ear:

"Courage, senor! You shall not be neglected. If there is any possibility of saving you, it shall be done!"

Pefferton looked up with a start. Donna Francisca was standing on the stairs beside him, with her beautiful face close to his, as she leaned over the balustrade.

"*Gracias, querida Francisca!*"

"Hush!" she interrupted. "Don't speak to me; only trust me. Here; take this, and read it as soon as you can safely."

She held out a bit of folded paper. Then, observing that his hands were not free, she thrust it into the folds of the sash that was wound tightly around his body.

"Heaven protect you, senores! *Hasta luego!*"

The next instant she was gone, and they heard only the silken rustle of her dress as she glided up the stairs.

They were allowed no time to reflect on this little incident. Rough hands were again laid upon them, and they were dragged out into the street. Once there, they were marched off to the guard-house, where they were locked in a dark cell, and left to the companionship of their thoughts.

CHAPTER XII.

IN DURANCE VILE.

The cell in which our Americans were confined was a small, vacant room, with stone floor and walls, and a high ceiling. It contained a single window—a square, grated aperture at a point considerably above their heads, and entirely beyond their reach. There was no furniture; not so much as a bench or a bedstead. In lieu of both, however, a *banqueta* extended along one side of the cell, and that was far better than they had expected. This *banqueta* was simply a structure of brick work, about the height of a common bench. Similar ones are to be found in all parts of Mexico, in public and private houses alike, and with *petates* spread upon them they not only become a substitute for sofas and chairs, but are used extensively to sleep on at night. A *petate* is a mat, the size of an ordinary blanket, woven out of palm-strips or a species of rush, and made to perform various offices in-doors and out. It is the universal bed of the lower classes. There were two of these mats on the *banqueta* in the cell, and groping across the room, the prisoners sat down side by side.

They were shrouded in darkness. Their captors did not allow them even the small comfort of a light, and there was no alternative but to pass the remainder of the night without.

For once in his life, Major Pefferton's spirits had sunk to a low ebb.

"I only regret one thing," he said, in a husky voice.

"What is that?" asked his companion, more cheerfully.

"I regret that I asked you to accompany me on this foolhardy errand. Had I brought this misfortune upon myself alone, I could have borne it without a murmur, and laughed at the yellow devils even from the scaffold; but the thought that I have dragged you into it—the certainty that you must suffer for my rashness—oh, God! it is horrible!"

And he bowed his head upon his hands and groaned.

"Don't do that," pleaded Fuller, uneasily. "I can't bear to see you in such a mood. I have just determined to let things take their course without the slightest show of despondency, but I can't do it if you carry on in this manner. Cheer up, old fellow. You are no more to blame for my present situation than I am for yours. At all events, I have learned something vastly important by coming here to-night."

"What have you learned?"

"You saw that cavalry officer that arrested us?"

"That handsome devil, the American traitor? Of course I did," responded the major, becoming interested in the subject. "He's the same fellow that cut up such a shine around Donna Francisca on the night of the fandango. Confound his sneaking bide! I should like to cross swords with him. I saw how he acted when he looked at you a while ago. He shrunk back as if you had shot him. What is it, Fuller? You acted almost as strangely as he. I am sure it was a mutual recognition, and can only conclude that this man is no stranger to you."

"Stranger! I should say not," returned Fuller, with bitter emphasis. "Better, perhaps, that he were. I am ashamed to tell you how far he is from being a stranger to me."

"A relative, perchance?"

"A relative, indeed. He is my own brother!"

"Lieutenant!"

"I speak truly: he is my brother, three years older than myself. He may be Captain La Vietro, here, but his proper name is Ralph Fuller. I almost recognized him when we met on the road, to-night. I was satisfied I had heard his voice before. When I happened upon his picture in Don Estevan's house, I did not think of it being that of the person who had helped us to enter the city, but I was struck by the resemblance it bore to my brother. I recognized him in an instant when I had a view of him in the light."

There was a moment of silence. The young lieutenant breathed audibly with his pent-up emotion, and the major stared at him in the darkness with a look of amazement.

"This is remarkable," asserted the latter. "Ever since I first met you, I have been laboring under the impression that there is an episode in your past life worth hearing. Won't you tell me about it, my boy?"

"I have made up my mind to do so," replied the lieutenant, in a low, steady voice. "It is not much, and will hardly interest you, but I know I shall feel better when I have told you all."

"I am interested already. Proceed."

"In the first place, then," began the lieutenant, "my home is in San Antonio, Texas. I believe I have told you that before, however. My parents have but two children—Ralph and myself, and up to the age of manhood no two brothers ever loved each other more than did we. Then the golden link snapped, and separated us forever. I met a beautiful girl, named Clarissa Vance, who was the daughter of a wealthy landowner, and became enamored of her. She was my ideal of a wife; lovely, accomplished, and a true woman."

"Ralph met her about the same time that I did, and although I did not suspect that he had been similarly affected by her charms, I knew he esteemed her highly, and was fond of her society. We both called at her father's house quite often; sometimes together, but generally alone. We were always welcome—one apparently no more so than the other. Clarissa was not only a brilliant conversationalist, but played and sung like a born musician; so you may judge it was no strained pleasure to submit one's self to her entertainment."

"Such a state of affairs could not long exist. I proposed and was accepted; my brother shortly afterward did the same, but, as a matter of course, with a different result. He was proud, like my father, and the fact that his younger and less handsome brother had won a victory over him was a terrible sting to his vanity. Besides, I believe he truly loved the girl,

and his rejection was a blow that crushed his happiness. He came to me in a raving passion and told me I had robbed him of more than life. He said I had foreseen his intention, and had meanly snatched the prize from his grasp. I tried to reason with him, but he refused to hear me. I told him I loved Clarissa, and would leave the decision of the matter to her. His rage increased then; he cursed me, and said I should never marry her, and his last words, as he rushed out of my room, were a warning to beware of his vengeance. I did not tell of my quarrel; I could not, at that time; and when she told me how submissively and honorably he had received his repulse, I was silent, and permitted her to praise him as one of the noblest and most unselfish men she had ever known!

"Two weeks after that, Ralph tried to murder me. He met me on the open prairie one dark night, and knocked me off my horse's back with a heavy club. It was a fearful blow, and must have killed me outright but for the thick cap I wore, and an effort I made to ward it off by throwing up my arm. As it was, my arm was broken, and when found I was lying on the prairie bleeding and insensible. I suppose Ralph had every reason to believe he had succeeded in his wicked design, for he fled the country that night with his load of guilt, and I have never seen him since, until this evening. But I kept my secret. No one suspected that it was my own brother who had attempted my life, and, consequently, no one thought of connecting anything bad with his disappearance. He had often before absented himself from home without telling anybody whither he was going, or when he would return, and the first week passed without creating the slightest uneasiness in the household. But when a month had elapsed, and still no tidings of the missing one, my parents were alarmed. Some surmised that the unknown enemy who had attacked me, had also attacked him on the same night and killed him. I kept silent.

"Another month went by, and then father received a letter from Ralph, bearing the New Orleans postmark. It was brief, and contained no explanation of his absence. He said that he had just heard that his brother was dead—had been foully assassinated—and he was anxious to know whether there was any truth in the report. I saw through it at once. The tone of his letter convinced me that he still believed he had killed me, and his object in writing it was to find out if he was suspected of the crime. In replying to his epistle, my unsuspecting father told him I had nearly recovered from my injuries, and related the circumstances of the mishap. After that, we never heard from him again, and I was naturally surprised to find him here, an officer in the Mexican army, and bearing a fictitious name."

The narrator paused, and Major Pefferton drew a long breath.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "that's enough to make a fellow look blue at times. No wonder I often find you in a melancholy mood. Fuller, I sympathize with you. Here's my hand."

"Thanks—but that is not all."

"Not all?"

"No. When I have told you the rest you will wonder still less at my melancholy moods." He stopped, as if he were choking, and cleared his throat. There was a touching sadness in the tone of his voice as he proceeded: "It was only a few days before I enlisted that I received a note from Clarissa Vance. Inclosed within it was the engagement ring which I had given her. She said the dream was over; that her eyes had been opened to my perfidy, and we never could be anything to each other again! I was stunned—thunderstruck! I could hardly convince myself at first that I was in my right mind. I read and re-read the note, and then went to see her to demand an explanation. She met me coldly. When I opened the subject to her, she assured me that all my shifting would avail me nothing, and she was not to be deceived a second time. I did not trust myself to say much. I was exasperated by what I thought a ruse of hers to get rid of me, and I left the house with a sickening conception that the light of my life was extinguished for all time to come. I have never seen her since. I entered the army—"

"Confound such a woman!" broke forth the major, leaping to his feet. "That was as shabby a trick as I ever heard of. Hers must be a heart of stone! Confound her!"

"Stop, major!" cried Fuller, sternly; "I would not speak a disrespectful word of her for all the world, and I can not bear to hear other's do it."

Pefferton stared at him in blank amazement. "If you knew the lady, you would not revile

her," continued the lieutenant. "She must have fancied she had good reason for breaking the engagement. Since we parted I have thought that it might have ended differently, had I kept cool and waited for an explanation."

"But, my dear fellow, if you think it can all be explained satisfactorily to both parties, why don't you write to the girl?"

"I have written to her. I wrote a long letter to her during my convalescence at Matamoras—but—it remains unanswered to this day."

Fuller rose abruptly, and began to pace the floor. Pefferton waited quietly for his friend's emotion to subside, and then generously turned the conversation into another channel.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DREAD WAITING.

THE prisoners did not attempt to sleep. Indeed, it is doubtful if they once thought of sleep amid the many other things that occupied their minds. They comprehended the horror of their situation to its fullest extent, nor allowed themselves to hope for even a small measure of lenity on the part of their captors. By the laws of war their offense was a capital one, and was punishable only by death. They knew too well that their fate would be nothing milder than that, but they made up their minds to meet it bravely, and in a manner to reflect no disgrace upon the country in whose cause they were to die.

Morning broke. The cheering daylight streamed in through the grated window, dispelling the dismal gloom of the cell, and ushering in a more congenial atmosphere. With it came sounds that spoke of a waking population. There was a commingling of many voices; a patter of hurrying feet on the pavement without; the distant roll of drums; the swelling chorus of a party of laborers somewhere near; the deep rumble of artillery-carriages in the streets; and the dash and clatter of galloping war-horses, mustering in the plazas.

The rising sun found the city teeming with busy life, and nestling in apparent security within the pale of her forts. How long would it be before her walls were battered, and her streets flowing with human blood?

In their lonely cell the prisoners looked up through the iron bars in thoughtful silence. A patch of clear sky was visible to them, and various tropical birds were soaring across it in every direction. In the distance, outlined against the ethereal blue, they saw the tricolored flag of Mexico floating over the battlements of some elevated stronghold, and it seemed mocking their misery as it flauntingly shook out its brilliant folds. Outside, all was bright, and smiling, and full of life. Within—dull, wretched, hopeless captivity! Freedom had never borne so pleasant an aspect as now, when it stood beyond their reach. And yet, it would not be for long. Death was soon to release them—grim, silent death! This morning they looked prayerfully at God's blue sky, in all the strength and vigor of early manhood, and dared not think they would live to witness the heralding of another day.

Then Major Pefferton bethought him of Donna Francisca's note. In searching him, his enemies had not disturbed it, and now, taking it from its hiding-place, and holding it up to the light, he eagerly devoured its contents. It was brief, and hastily written.

"AMIGOS: Be of good cheer. Your commander shall be informed of your condition. Have your limbs free when another night comes, if possible. Some one will attempt your release. Adios! adios!"

That was all, but it was enough. It had been intended to enliven the dull hours of their incarceration, and for a few moments it had the effect of inspiring them with sweet hope. But that feeling was driven away by a little reflection. The note had been written in haste, and without due consideration. The promise was that of a brave and heroic woman, but they began to wish heartily that she would give up all thoughts of fulfilling it, as the attempt would only involve her in difficulty, without benefiting them.

She had enjoined them to free their limbs, if possible. It was an unnecessary admonition; their limbs were already free. She had doubtless supposed they would be put in chains—and naturally, too, for it certainly was the custom—but, instead of that, they were allowed the full use of their hands and feet. At first they had marveled at this undue liberty, but a brief inspection of their surroundings had revealed to them the cause of the omission. They were now ready to agree with their enemies, that it would be a superfluous precaution to fetter them as an impediment to their escape.

Four walls of solid stone frowned upon them from every side, and even had they possessed the proper instruments, might have sneered at all efforts to penetrate them. Had the heavy iron door been less impassable, it would still have been madness to try and escape through it; and as for the window, it was entirely out of the question. Not that it was too high, for they could have reached it by mounting each other's shoulders, but there they would be confronted by an insuperable obstacle, in the shape of the thick, stout bars that intersected it. Even granting that some possible chance might have enabled them to pass these, it is not likely that they could have accomplished it without being seen by somebody in the street; and, in all probability, they would have dropped into the very arms of their captors, for a number of them seemed congregated under the window at nearly all hours.

Of course the prisoners had been relieved of all their weapons, and every thing else that could possibly have been used to advantage, either in breaking out or anticipating the law. Their united ingenuity could devise no feasible plan of escape, and the thought of being assisted by persons outside did not once occur to them, until Donna Francisca's note was read.

As already stated, the joy produced by the perusal of this little missive was exceedingly short-lived. How could she save them? By exposing herself to considerable peril, she might be able to carry the news to the commander-in-chief of the American forces, but what would it avail? It did not seem probable to them that General Taylor had the power to avert their fate. That he would negotiate for their release, they did not once doubt, but they felt assured that none of his proffered terms would be accepted. Certainly he would not smuggle men into Monterey during the coming night for the purpose of rescuing them by stealth and stratagem. Such a step would be imprudent, at best, and would only make matters worse. The battle could only save them by coming off before the time decided upon for their punishment, and they knew the chances were ten to one against such a contingency.

These things all considered, they were compelled to doubt the success of the Donna Francisca's schemes.

"No doubt 'tis the best she can do," said the major; "but she will be sadly disappointed—poor thing!"

"I only hope she will not compromise herself by attempting it," said the lieutenant.

The man who brought in their breakfast told them they were to be court-martialed that morning. He spoke the truth, for they had scarcely finished their repast when they were waited upon by a strong guard, who marched them out in silence. They were taken before a tribunal of army officers and tried as spies. The examination was over in a very short time, and then came the sentence—they were to die at the *garrote* on the following day!

Notwithstanding the solemn character of the sentence, it was a relief to know what their fate was to be, and when they were to meet it. They heard the words that sealed their doom as calmly as if they were addressed to some one else; and amid the commotion that followed, they were escorted back to their cell.

When left alone once more, they did not give way to any violent burst of feeling. On the contrary, they sat down on the *banqueta* and talked calmly of the morrow. Their sentence was no worse than they had expected, and they had gone before the court prepared to hear it. A lighter one would have astonished them. Both were young and vigorous, and life was a great deal to them, but they were philosophical enough to yield to stern fate with the best grace possible.

"At any rate, we will have the consolation of showing these greasers how brave men can die," remarked the major.

"I try to accept my situation without complaining," said Fuller, "but I cannot help thinking of—of—"

"Clarissa Vance?"

"Yes. If I could but see her before I die, I am sure I should not murmur at my lot."

"But you can't see her, you know; so don't worry yourself unnecessarily."

By this time the prisoners began to feel the need of sleep. The fatigue of the preceding day and night demanded a recompense, and stretching themselves on the *petates*, they were soon wrapt in unconsciousness.

How long they slept, neither had any means of determining, but they afterward learned that it was late in the afternoon when they awoke. They opened their eyes about the same time,

and both started to a sitting posture. Something had waked them. Was it thunder? No, it could hardly be thunder—and yet it was very like. Heavens! it was the booming of cannon! As they recognized the well-known sound they sprung to their feet involuntarily, and looking into each other's faces, listened anxiously. Hail the battle already commenced? The roar of artillery, the bursting of shells, the rattle of musketry, and distant cheers of men, were now borne distinctly to their ears. Those were familiar sounds—the sounds of strife. There could be no doubt that an engagement of a very hostile nature was going on at that moment. The spies felt their hearts beating quicker, and the blood rushing like lightning through their veins. What could these noises mean, except that the Americans had begun the attack?

"And yet, if such is the case, our army has shifted its position," muttered Fuller. "These combatants are evidently north-west of the city."

"Very true," conceded Pefferton. "Perhaps it is the most accessible point. Ah, no!" he added, after a pause; "I think I understand it now. A division of the army is moving around to the westward, in order to gain the rear of the city, and the enemy in disputing the passage. In all probability, Taylor has seen fit to engage the attention of the defenders in that direction, for the purpose of magnifying his chances of success when the city is stormed in front. By the great Jehovah! who knows but this may be our salvation?"

Fuller started.

"What do you mean?" he asked, quickly.

"Mean?" said Pefferton. "Why, bless you, I mean there is a show for us—the ghost of a chance to escape our doom. The firing isn't for nothing. Perhaps the whole army will be ready to make a general assault as early as tomorrow, and if so, by George! won't these devils have something else to do besides strangling us? If they don't forget us entirely, they may postpone our business until they have whipped the Americans, and such a postponement will be delightfully indefinite, you know. What say you, my boy?"

The lieutenant did not reply. A wild hope was fluttering in his bosom. Visions of life and liberty passed before him, and in their wake came another, sweeter than both. Fond, fond hope! Perhaps, after all, he would live to win again the beautiful idol of his heart.

The firing was kept up at intervals until nearly nightfall, and then ceased altogether. The shadows crept on apace, and deepened gradually, till the darkness of another night brooded over the earth. The weary warriors on the battlefield sunk into deep repose, and silence stalked among the living and dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHAMPION TO THE RESCUE.

As on the preceding night, the prisoners were not allowed to have a light in their cell, and they were soon unable to distinguish each other.

Neither was sleepy now, and sitting down side by side, they entered into conversation. Hour after hour they sat there and talked, and the night advanced unheeded. They talked about their separate loves, and sympathized with each other; they went back into their past lives, and related much that they never would have thought of relating under other circumstances; they speculated on what the coming day was liable to bring forth, and discussed their chances of life; they bestowed high encomiums on the bravery of the beautiful Mexican girl, and prayed that her eagerness to help them would not get the better of her judgment. Many subjects were duly ventilated, to kill the tedium of hours in which they could not sleep, but at last their conversation began to lag.

It must have been considerably past midnight, when Fuller rose to take a turn across the room. In the center of the cell he started back with a sudden exclamation. Something had slapped him in the face. Surprised and bewildered, he put out his hand and grasped the object. It was a rope—a long, dangling rope of the lariat kind, suspended from above. What black jugglery was this? How came such a thing here?

He had scarcely propounded the question to himself, when he was further startled by a voice over his head. In a sharp, distinct whisper, it cried:

"Quick!—both of you!—climb this rope, and come with me! 'Tis your only chance. Don't waste a moment!"

Fuller turned his eyes upward. A gray spot was visible in the midst of the darkness. It was

a hole in the roof! He felt a rain-drop fall on his upturned face, and saw something that resembled a human head framed in the aperture. The truth was clear to him in an instant. Donna Francisca had kept her word, and somebody was here to rescue them!

Major Pefferton had heard the voice, and sprung up as if he were shot. He grasped the lieutenant's arm.

"What's that?" he demanded, excitedly. "Who spoke?"

"A friend, I presume," replied Fuller. "Feel this—it's a rope. It's for us to escape by. The Donna has been true to her promise."

"God bless her! I might have known it. Ha!—the roof! I had not thought of that. By heaven! there's a trap-door! Fuller, my boy, our condition is not so bad as we imagined. There's a possibility that we may be saved, after all."

Just then the voice above whispered again: "As you value your lives, climb this rope."

"Up it is!" said the major. "You first, lieutenant!"

The lieutenant, grasping the lariat, which had been made fast above, threw his weight upon it to test its strength. Finding it secure, he began to ascend, hand over hand.

He went up rapidly and silently. In a few moments he had reached the open trap-door, where the unknown was awaiting him. Grasping the edges with both hands, he drew himself up, and crawled out upon the *azotea*.

A steady, chilly rain had been falling ever since early in the evening, and had not yet ceased. A dark pall obscured the stars, and the flat roofs of the buildings were wet and slippery.

The lieutenant swept a searching glance around. Not a soul was in sight, except his deliverer. This individual was a mere youth—or seemingly so—and was comparatively small of stature. By the light of a neighboring lamp it could be seen that he wore the uniform of a Mexican soldier, though unencumbered by arms.

He looked closely at the Lieutenant, as the latter came up through the hole, and anxiously inquired:

"Is this Lieutenant Fuller?"

"It is," replied Fuller, trying to get a view of his interrogator's face. "But who are you? Your voice has a familiar sound. I know you are a friend, though you wear an enemy's garb."

"Hush! Don't talk so loud. I am Tippy, the Texan!"

"Tippy, the Texan! Is it possible?" exclaimed Fuller, in astonishment. "And why do you risk your life for us?"

"Hush!" repeated the youth. "We haven't time to talk about that now. Isn't Major Pefferton coming up?"

"Most assuredly."

The lieutenant bent over the aperture, and tried to look down through the impenetrable darkness. He had no sooner done so than he jumped back with an exclamation of alarm, and clutched his companion's hand, as if he would pull him away from the spot.

"God of mercy! it is all up with us!" he cried, with an air of desperation. "I heard a noise below—a noise as of some one trying to open the door of the cell from the outside. There—look!"

At that instant there was a "swash" and a rattle, and the rope came whirling up through the trap-door, and fell upon the roof.

Then they heard the major exclaiming, in a low, penetrating voice:

"Fly for your lives! Somebody's coming in! Never mind me!"

The words were not fairly uttered before Tippy, the Texan, had seized the trap-door, and shut it down. It was done as quick as thought, but without the least noise; and then the lieutenant felt a small hand slip into his, and heard the youth whispering:

"Come, quick! there is yet a chance for us." Fuller ran a few steps, and came to a sudden halt.

"I can't go," he said calmly. "I won't desert my friend in this shameful manner. Good-by; and God bless you!"

"No, no; you *must* come with me!" said the youth, earnestly. "It is death to stay here! You will be killed!"

"I know it," was the quiet response; "but it is no worse for me than for him. We are in the same boat, and I will share his fate. Go, my brave boy, and save yourself; for I tell you again I won't desert the major. It would be an act of cowardice. Go, Tippy; don't let your blood be upon my head!"

But Tippy folded his arms over his breast, and stood firm.

"No, sir, I won't go," he said, with the utmost composure. "If you stay, Lieutenant Fuller, I stay; and if you die, I die. Don't be unreasonable. Consult your common sense. Think how much better it is to save three lives by an act of prudence, than to cause as many deaths through a mistaken sense of duty. It is not cowardice; it is true bravery under the dominion of prudence. The desertion, as you call it, will not be for long. When we have escaped this immediate danger, we can then extend a helping hand to the major. Believe me, I speak the truth! Oh, in the name of God and humanity, don't tarry here a moment longer!"

His composure had fled, and it could be seen that he was greatly agitated as this closing appeal burst from his lips. He clung to the lieutenant, and looked pleadingly up into his face, with almost childish simplicity and earnestness.

The force of the argument was not lost upon Fuller. He was surprised and bewildered, but even in his confusion he saw that it would be wrong to stay. He was conscious of being overpowered, and the next thing he knew, he was running swiftly across the *housetop*, hand in hand with his brave young preserver.

In the meantime what of Major Pefferton?

He had just grasped the rope, preparatory to climbing it, when he heard somebody unlocking the door of the cell. He knew he would not have time to ascend; and with commendable celerity of thought, as well as dexterity of movement, he flung the lariat up through the hole, and commanded his friend to save himself. Then he threw himself in a lounging attitude on the *banqueta*. When the person entered, the trap-door was closed, and all was still. The intruder was one of the guard. He had not been attracted by any noise, but merely looked in to see if all was well. Perhaps he designed taking a nap, and deemed it necessary to use this precaution before incurring such a personal risk. Fortunately, he did not come clear in, but stopped in the half-open door, and held a flickering light above his head, while he peered around the room. He spoke, and the major answered drowsily, as if he had just awakened. While replying to all the questions put to him, however, the major kept snoring quite audibly, and thus made it seem that Fuller was lying beside him fast asleep. It was a cunning artifice, and succeeded perfectly; for at length when he requested the guard not to wake up his companion, who was very tired, and needed all the rest he could get, the man appeared to think it was all right, and backed out without another word. The heavy iron door was closed and fastened, and Major Pefferton was once more alone.

Alone! It was horrible to think of now, since liberty had been almost within his grasp. But his was a nature that could find consolation, whatever befell him, and in this instance the burden of his woe was lightened in a great measure by the reflection that Lieutenant Fuller was gone, with no prospect of his being pursued.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROAD TO FREEDOM.

SILENTLY as specters the two men glided from roof to roof, in their flight from the prison, expecting every moment to hear the alarm of the guard, and the tramp of pursuing feet. As somebody had certainly entered the cell at the very minute of their departure, they looked upon a chase as an almost inevitable event, and consequently deemed their chance of escape exceedingly meager; but, as good luck would have it, Major Pefferton's clever ruse had saved them from this additional danger, and the expected sounds were not heard.

Tippy, the Texan, who held the lieutenant's hand tightly in his own, did not pause, but ran nimbly on across the deserted *azoteas*, perfectly heedless of the thick gloom, and of the peril into which it was apt to betray them. Fuller followed as best he could, half fearful the while that an unguarded step would sooner or later precipitate him to the earth, or into the gaping mouth of an open trap-door.

The night could not have been more friendly to their enterprise. Besides being pitch-dark, the cold steady rain that was falling was such as to make dry nooks most tempting to shivering sentinels, and the escaped prisoner began to harbor strong hopes of passing these watches unobserved. All around was a dark jumble of house-tops, minarets, spires, and silent streets. One or two lamps were passed, but these shed only a flimsy light through the rainy darkness, and were not near enough to excite apprehension.

Of course they could not proceed far in this manner. They soon found the buildings so far apart that it was impossible longer to pass from one roof to another, without changing their course.

Still Tippy was not in the least disconcerted. He was returning the way he had come, and he had forgotten none of its deviations. Without stopping, he took the lieutenant to the head of an *escalera*, or stone staircase, that led into a garden below. This they descended slowly and cautiously. Neither spoke a word, but Fuller began to do considerable thinking, for it now occurred to him that there was something to be wondered at in the fact that Tippy was his rescuer. There could be no other supposition than that the youth had come alone, and of his own free will; endangering his life for persons who were almost entire strangers to him. What had instigated him to an act so disinterested? Was it sheer recklessness, and an inordinate longing to be continually in the midst of danger? He was evidently as sly as he was bold, to have safely performed the feat of effecting an entrance into the city; to say nothing of his having found the hole in the roof of the guardhouse, without suffering detection. But was it possible that he had accomplished all this with no aid whatever? Was not Donna Francisca at the bottom of it?

Down the stone steps they went, and into the garden. Here they found it necessary to exercise great stealth in order not to attract the attention of any vigilant watch-dog that might happen to be lurking in the vicinity. The young Texan led the way to an opening in the garden-wall, and they passed through into a narrow alley. Following this, they soon came out upon a dark, unrequited street, and finding an open avenue before them, mended their pace considerably. Taking the middle of the street, they ran swiftly on tiptoe toward the outskirts of the town.

As they proceeded, the houses became few in number and small in size, till the whole presented the appearance of a scattered village. Hurrying on, without stopping to look or listen, they presently discovered that the street had merged into a long, straight lane, lined on each side by tall hedges. A minute later they heard the sharp click of a musket directly in front of them, and a gruff voice sung out the customary challenge: "Quién vive?" They were confronted by a Mexican sentinel. But Tippy went forward and spoke a few words to him in a low tone, causing an instantaneous change in his bearing. Dropping his hostile manner, the sentinel stepped aside and permitted the fugitives to pass without further opposition.

Lieutenant Fuller was amazed.

"In the name of wonder how did you pacify that fellow?" he asked, speaking for the first time since leaving the prison.

"I had only to assure him that it was I," was the hasty rejoinder.

"How could you gain your object by so simple a process?"

"He was instructed to let us pass. Gold accomplished it."

"Ah! you bribed him?"

"He was bribed, but not by me."

"By whom, then?"

"Donna Francisca! Here; come this way."

They now left the lane, and pursued their way across a broad field. Reaching the opposite margin, they entered another lane, and began to follow its course. In this direction they had proceeded but a little distance, when their progress was checked by the sight of two or three torch-lights just ahead of them, and a group of men moving about an earthwork, where a battery was planted. Turning aside, the fugitives crawled through the hedge, and again took to the fields.

After making a wide *detour*, they finally reached a road; and a half-hour later they were safe within the American lines.

They now took time to breathe and think, and went on their way more leisurely. The lieutenant could hardly realize that he was saved—that the horrible fate which, a short time before, had seemed positively inevitable, was now no more to be dreaded. But it was all over—he was saved, and as he saw how much he was to be thankful for, he seized his companion's hand and pressed it warmly.

"God bless you, Tippy!" he said, with deep feeling. "If you were not already noted as one of the bravest men in the army, this night's work would prove you a hero. You are a noble boy. I believe you have done what no other man in camp would have undertaken voluntarily. It was a daring and disinterested deed, and I regret that I didn't deserve to be

saved at such a risk. I love you, Tippy. If ever I can be of any service to you, one way or another—either by turning over my hand, or sacrificing my life—I beg you will let me know it."

"Please don't mention it," said Tippy, falteringly, as if he were struggling with some powerful emotion. "You mistake, sir; you give me too much credit; indeed you do! There's another who did more than I, and who deserves all the praise."

"To whom do you refer?"

"Donna Francisca de Salamanca."

"Ah—true! But what did she do?"

"It is to her I owe the success of my undertaking."

"Possible? How came you acquainted with her?"

"I was not aware that such a person existed, until to-night."

"Explain."

"I will. As soon as I learned that you and the major had gone to the city, and failed to return at the promised time, I made up my mind to enter the town myself, and see whether you were prisoners or not. On the night you went away, about thirty of the enemy were captured. One of these I robbed of his clothing, the better to perform my self-assigned mission. Informing nobody of my intention, I set out amid the rain and darkness; but between the lines I was met by this Mexican lady, who was on her way to our camp to apprise the general of your unfortunate situation. She told me all, and then I assured her that she had gone far enough—that I had resolved to attempt your release, and would thank her for her guidance. She turned about, and went with me. Possessing the countersign, she led me safely into the city; and not only that, but prepared the way for my exit with you. I fear I should have never accomplished it without her aid. The man she bribed chanced to be an old servant of her father's. After giving me instructions that enabled me to go directly to the trap-door in the roof of the prison, the lady returned home."

"Alas! she will be sorely disappointed when she learns that the major was not rescued," said Fuller, sorrowfully. "It was to save his life that she risked so much, and here I am enjoying the benefit of her devotion to him. I feel like a robber. If I could exchange places with him at this moment, I would gladly do it."

"If anybody is to blame for the present state of affairs, it is certainly not you," asserted Tippy, briefly.

By this time they had reached the camp. Here they separated, and repaired to their different tents, to resume the uniforms that had been temporarily discarded.

At sunrise, Lieutenant Fuller was before the commander-in-chief. He gave his report with characteristic modesty and brevity, and told the story of his capture and escape in a few words; though he dwelt a little on the daring bravery of Tippy, the Texan. The general was grieved to hear of Major Pefferton's detention, pronouncing him one of the best officers in the army, and expressing a regret that he had given his consent to the enterprise. He was not without a hope, however, that the Mexicans would be too much occupied in defending themselves, to think of executing the spy that day.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO IS HE?

On the preceding day a division of the army had been sent to gain the Saltillo road, in the rear of Monterey, in order that the city might be assaulted on both sides simultaneously. It was during this circuitous march around the hill of the Bishop's Palace, that the skirmishing had occurred which had reached the ears of the prisoners. Worth had dispatched a note to his superior officer, suggesting a maneuver of some kind in front, to better his chances of carrying the detached works in the rear; and thus it happened that, on the morning of the 21st, the main body of the troops was ordered under arms, and put in motion. All the infantry and artillery were moved toward the city, while two regiments of horse were thrown to the right to reinforce Worth, in case that officer should find his strength ineffective.

The regiment to which Lieutenant Fuller belonged formed a part of the force on the other side of the town, and it was not deemed practicable for him to join it before the attack was made. In consequence of a captain's illness, he was therefore instructed to take command of a company of infantry in the First

division, which was to storm the eastern fortifications. Gratified by this commission of trust, he hastened to the front. But, even while marching at the head of his men, he could not settle his mind upon any thing that was not directly connected with Major Pefferton or Tippy, the Texan. Thoughts of the former made him clutch his sword with a firmer grip, and long for the affray to begin, for he felt that the prisoner was lost unless the enemy could be speedily engaged. This was the day that the court-martial had decided upon for the execution, but the hour had not been specified, and there was room for hope that he had not been harmed as yet. If not, his captors would forget him at sight of the long columns of blue-coated men pressing rapidly forward to the onslaught, with their bristling bayonets and waving banners, and would think of him no more until their own danger should have become a thing of the past.

His soliloquy was interrupted by the appearance of one of its subjects. Chancing to turn his head, he saw Tippy marching along within a few yards of him, carrying his rifle on his shoulder. His handsome young face was all aglow, as if he were eager to plunge into the excitement and peril of battle, and his sparkling eyes flashed from point to point of the enemy's defenses, in anticipation of the approaching struggle.

Fuller drew his attention and beckoned to him. He came to the officer's side with a slight show of hesitancy.

"I have missed you since we parted this morning," said the lieutenant. "I had almost concluded that you were gone to join our own regiment."

"No, I did not think of that," replied Tippy, quietly. "I thought it was not worth while to put myself to so much trouble, since it can not matter where I fight."

"Very true. I am glad we are so close together."

Tippy reddened a little, and turned his face away as he said:

"Many of our brave men will fall to-day. It is sad to think that some of our dearest friends may be among the slain."

"God alone knows who of us will be in our graves at the dawn of another day," said the lieutenant. "There can be no doubt that we will meet with a warm reception."

"And yet the victory will be ours," observed the young Texan, confidently.

"I believe it will," returned Fuller. "But let that pass. I wish to speak with you on a different subject."

The youth shot a piercing glance at him.

"Pardon me, sir, but perhaps this is no time for conversation on any subject," he suggested, with a look of apprehension.

"I only wanted to ask from what part of Texas you came? My interest in you prompts the inquiry."

Tippy started, and again looked searchingingly at the speaker.

"Why do you ask?" he demanded, with an anxious expression.

"Simply because I hail from that country myself," was the reply, "and I have a curiosity to know how near each other we lived before this war brought us together."

For a moment Tippy continued to regard the officer with a keen gaze; then his eyes fell, and a smile played over his countenance.

"You will be surprised when I tell you," said he. "I am aware, sir, that your home is in San Antonio."

"You have been correctly informed; it is."

"My home, also, is in San Antonio."

"Yours!" exclaimed Fuller, in astonishment.

"You jest?"

"I am acquainted with many people there," said the youth, with an amused look. "You are at liberty to test my sincerity."

"Perhaps you know a young lady, then, named—"

"Clarissa Vance! Oh, certainly; I know her well."

Fuller's eyes opened to their widest extent.

"How know you I meant Clarissa Vance?" he stammered.

"For the reason that you were once well acquainted with her. You see, I speak positively. I know whereof I speak. Gossip used to connect your name and hers in a peculiar manner. They said you were engaged. I am sure, sir, she could do worse."

"She seemed to think she could do better," muttered the lieutenant, half to himself. "We are not engaged now."

"A misunderstanding, perhaps. Somebody

must have poisoned her mind with pernicious tales, for I'm sure she never ceased to love—"

The youth checked himself, as if it had suddenly occurred to him that he was growing too loquacious."

"Who are you?" asked the lieutenant, abruptly.

"Tippy, the Texan."

"But your name—your full name? It will assist my memory. I surely knew you at one time or another. Tell me who you are."

"I can not," replied Tippy, firmly but respectfully. "You know more about me than any one else in the army. Please don't ask any more questions; if you do I must refuse to answer them. Of course I have another name, but I have good reasons for keeping it a secret—reasons which you will probably know at some future time."

He spoke earnestly and candidly, and showed by his whole bearing that, while he did not wish to offend, it would be utterly useless to question him further with regard to his name.

At this juncture a halt was ordered, and the conversation was necessarily brought to an end. In the discharge of his duty, Fuller's attention was diverted for a short time, and when he again looked around, Tippy was nowhere to be seen.

He was perplexed. This mysterious youth had lived in San Antonio—had known him there, and was well acquainted with Clarissa Vance? Who could he be, and what were his reasons for withholding his name? The more Fuller thought of it, the more puzzled he became. He was certain now that he had seen that face often in the past, but he could not guess to whom it belonged, though he tried till his head ached.

CHAPTER XVII.

STORMING MONTEREY.

THE force whose fortunes Lieutenant Fuller was to follow, had reached a secure position near the city, and halted. It had been detached from the army, and thrown forward for the purpose of turning the attention of the garrison, as well as making an attempt to carry one of the strongholds that defended the eastern approaches.

Two companies were now sent in advance to make a reconnaissance. There were a few minutes of suspense; the soldiers seemed transformed into stone, as they stood like so many rigid statues, clutching their weapons with an ominous gripe, and holding themselves in readiness for action. Then came a shock that made the earth tremble. The advanced party was fired upon from Fort Teneria—the nearest redoubt—and a shower of solid shot plowed an avenue through the unprotected ranks. Before they could retreat, the scouts became engaged with a large body of lancers that came out to meet them, and for a moment it seemed they would be literally trampled in the dust. But their friends saw their danger—the word was given, in the thrilling voice of the commanding officer—and the troops rushed forward to support the detachment.

This movement was the signal for the enemy to pour forth a double fire from the fort and citadel, but the assailants passed unflinchingly through the terrific ordeal, and were soon driving the lancers back from the position they had taken. Louder and louder grew the din. The American artillery came to the front at a full gallop, plunging fearlessly through the iron hail that raked its path, till it reached a narrow lane near the enemy's works. Here it unlimbered, and opened upon the forts and barricades with furious energy, calling down the vengeance of the sheltered foe. The answer came quick and terrible. Guns from all the forts joined in the work of repulsion, and grape, canister and round-shot swept every lane and garden, whistling through the air, and bounding over the stony pavements in streams that carried death in their course.

On through this withering cannonade the gallant Colonel Garland led his staggering troops, though they fell by scores, and groans and shrieks were added to the noise of battle. The loss became intolerable, and they were finally obliged to fall back, and wait for reinforcements.

These were speedily sent to their assistance, and the contest was renewed with redoubled vigor. The new force marched across the plain with flying colors and glittering arms, and pressed forward to storm Fort Teneria; while shout upon shout, from officers and men, rose clear and loud to the sky.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Fuller found himself in a lane or street, with a few houses scattered

along its course, cheering his men on toward the city. They were exposed to a galling fire from the second and third forts, and the havoc was terrible.

Fuller rushed up the street at the head of his company, his shouts of encouragement inspiring the men with some of his own dauntless bravery, as they followed whither he led.

Although the converging streams of shot seemed to be the only agents of death thereabout, yet the lieutenant came very near being ushered out of the world by somewhat different means.

While passing an old, deserted, stone house, a hand suddenly seized him from behind, and he was jerked backward with a violence that nearly threw him off his legs. Almost at the same instant, a huge mass of stone and mortar darted downward in front of him, and struck the ground close to his feet. It had missed him by a hair's breadth. Had it struck him, he never would have breathed again.

Shuddering at the thought of his narrow escape, he turned to see who was his deliverer. A young soldier stood there, with powder-bearded face, holding a musket in his hand. It was Tippy, the Texan. This was the first time he had seen him since their conversation during the march. He grasped his hand and wrung it warmly, looking the gratitude he could not express in words. Then they became separated again, and the fight went on.

But it was over at last. That day of carnage came to an end, and the weary warriors sunk to rest, only to dream of horrors yet to come. Fort Teneria had been carried at a fearful cost, and the Stars and Stripes floating over its ramparts, told of that hard-earned victory. Besides, a secure foothold had been gained in the town, and the Second division operating in the rear of the city, had stormed and taken Federation Hill.

Night robed the bloody battle-field in mournful darkness. Most of the troops were ordered back to camp, but Fuller and Tippy formed part of a detachment that was detailed to guard the fort, and were not relieved from duty. Thus, after the severe labors of the day, they passed a restless night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUT OF THE DUNGEON.

On the following day the attack was not renewed, though a spirited fire was kept up by the batteries on both sides. Worth's division, however, took the Bishop's Palace by a brilliant assault, and thus opened, on the western side, an undisputed road to the town. Then the Mexicans abandoned the outworks adjacent to Fort Teneria, and nothing was left for the two generals to do but to commence operations against the city itself. These movements were conducted simultaneously, and both aimed at the same object.

When the morning of the 23d dawned upon the contending armies, preparations were hastily executed for the main attack upon the inner defenses. It was conducted cautiously, but, after some reconnoitering, the forces began to advance openly and steadily, and in a short time the conflict was again raging furiously.

Hurling all opposition aside, the exasperated assailants fought their way toward the central plaza. Appalled by the irresistible force of the onset, the Mexicans fell back from building to building, and from square to square, still fighting with praiseworthy endurance against their impending fate. As the heat of the contest increased, the Texans burst doors open with battering implements, rushed into the houses and ascended to the *azoteas*, where they were on a level with the enemy's skirmishers. Here they emptied their rifles with deadly effect, and the foe was repeatedly dislodged with frightful losses in killed and wounded.

Tippy kept close to Lieutenant Fuller through all, and his cool courage called forth the undisguised admiration of that officer, who wondered more and more what could be the mystery connected with this remarkable youth. Whenever the lieutenant entered a house, or ran into a court, or leaped over the enemy's breastworks, Tippy followed him with nimble feet, as if resolved to keep sight of him in spite of every impediment.

While the struggle was at its height, Fuller's notice was attracted to a female figure moving along close to the walls of the houses. She was dressed in plain black, and wore a veil of the same somber hue. But her identity would have been hard to conceal at any time, from one who had previously met her, and although Fuller could not obtain so much as a glimpse of her face, yet he was not slow to recognize her. That

statuesque figure, with its elliptical outline and matchless grace of carriage, could belong only to one person—the Donna Francisca de Salamanca.

He was somewhat surprised to see her there, inasmuch as she was utterly alone, and seemed uselessly exposing herself to the danger. He noticed that she stopped ever and anon, and glanced hastily around, scanning the faces of the soldiers as if searching for some one. Who could she be seeking among those strangers? Who, but himself?

His mind was made up in an instant. With a few agile steps he cleared the distance between himself and the lady, and lifted his cap with a courteous salute, as he reached her side.

"Donna Francisca, this is hardly the place for you."

She started, and gave him a keen look.

"*Señor teniente!*" she exclaimed, in a low, fluttering voice, as she recognized him. "I am glad of this; I have been looking for you."

"Looking for me!" echoed Fuller, curiously. "Is that why you're exposing your life in this rash manner?"

"Partly," she replied; "but not wholly."

Fuller turned pale with a sudden dread.

"You have news for me?" he demanded, "news concerning Major Pefferton! What is it? Has he escaped from prison?"

"No; but he has not been executed."

"Thank Heaven for that! I hoped and prayed that the attack would interfere with their arrangements. I feared it would not, and I felt that my own liberty did not belong to me. Had my friend been rescued, instead of myself, then you would have been happy in the reflection that your noble exertions in his behalf had not proved all in vain."

"Vaya! you must not say that. There was consolation in the knowledge that even one of you was saved. If I was grieved to learn that he remained in custody, I certainly had no occasion to regret your escape, for, of course, neither you nor the young cavallero to whom you owe your liberty, was in any way to blame. But, enough of this. I have been looking for you, to tell you that your friend is still alive, so that you may help him out of his confinement. See! we are near the guard-house. Perhaps we will meet some of his stubborn captors there, but you have a trusty sword, and a host of trusty men. Come, señor."

"Stay!" cried Fuller, hesitating. "You are in constant danger here. I can do this alone. Don't be rash. Go home, where you will be free from peril, and you have my promise that Pefferton shall be wielding a blade against his foes within ten minutes."

"No, no; don't drive me back," pleaded the Donna. "I can't go home till I see him. Please let me go. I don't mind the danger."

He did not utter another syllable of remonstrance, and together they ran toward the stone building in which Major Pefferton was incarcerated.

Fuller summoned a half-dozen men to his aid, and by dint of diligent labor with picks and crow-bars, the heavy outer door was forced open. They set up a shout of triumph, and rushed into the corridor of the prison, where they at once attacked the door of the cell in which their comrade was confined. The work was conducted vigorously, and occupied but a few minutes. The door flew back with a crash, and the lieutenant sprang in. He had heard no sound to assure him that the major had not been murdered by his guards, but he was not long kept in want of evidence. He was scarcely inside when he was seized by a pair of strong arms, and whirled round and round in the bear-like embrace of the major—an occurrence which proved him to be still in the possession of his muscular animation.

Then the rescued prisoner found himself surrounded by a crowd of friends, who, wild with exultation, lifted him upon their shoulders, and bore him out of the cell amid a storm of cheers.

But, as soon as they were in the passage he uttered a joyful shout, struggled free from the many hands that held him, and leaped to the ground. The next instant he was holding two white hands in his, and gazing tenderly down into the glorious orbs of Donna Francisca, while his countenance beamed with the rapturous delight that agitated his bosom.

"*Querida Francisca!*" he murmured, passionately; "this is a blissful moment. I did not expect to see you here. God bless you, my brave darling, for your noble efforts in behalf—"

"Stop! I have done nothing," she hastily declared, though she blushed with evident pleasure at his words of praise and endearment.

"What could I do—a woman? I only came to see your friends liberate you. 'Twas the lieutenant who led them here."

"True, darling; but I had no reference to this day's proceedings. Was it not you who assisted Lieutenant Fuller to escape?"

"Carrambo! not I."

"But his rescuer was acting under your directions?"

"Not exactly. 'Twas a soldier from your own camp, who was on his way hither to attempt your release when I met him."

"Indeed! He must have been a courageous fellow, and one whose heart is in the right place. I should like to take him by the hand."

"He said he knew you both, well."

"Did you learn his name?"

"I believe he is called Tippy, the Texan."

"Brave boy! I might have guessed it was him. The whole army knows Tippy, the Texan. A braver man never breathed vital air. But I'll lay a wager that you assisted him to enter the city, and told him how to find and rescue us!"

"Hark!" said Donna Francisca, suddenly. "They are fighting on the *azotea*. Your friends are going up. See! the lieutenant is waiting for you. Here is a sword—I took it from a dead man's hand—accept it, and do your duty, and may the saints protect you."

She drew from beneath the folds of her cloak a fine Toledo blade, and presented it to the major.

Observing that no one was noticing his movements, he slipped his arm around the unresisting form of the blushing beauty, and strained her to his breast.

"My own darling!" he said, in his tenderest tones. "Before I go, please say one word—say that you love me—and let me taste those sweet lips as a token of your sincerity."

Her head drooped upon his shoulder, and her heart fluttered like a captive bird beating against the wires of its cage. Then she looked up resolutely, and said:

"I do love you! I am yours till death—*tuya/tuya!*"

"You make me happy, dearest!"

She put up her lips, and he kissed them again and again. Then he clutched his sword, and tore himself away.

CHAPTER XIX.

A BRUSH WITH THE BLADES.

"Come, major!" cried the lieutenant, as his fellow-officer hurried forward. "Are you provided with weapons?"

"Here's as good a sword as ever armed a warrior," answered the major, holding up Donna Francisca's present.

"Good! If you need fire-arms, you will have no difficulty in finding them. Come with us. Some of our men have met the enemy at close quarters on the roof above. Will you go up?"

"By all means. Lead on."

A ladder had been taken into the cell, and erected to the trap-door by which Fuller had effected his exodus from the prison. Already a stream of excited men was pouring up it. The two officers sprang to the foot of the ladder, and began to ascend with the agility of sailors.

In a minute they reached the top, and with drawn swords they leaped out upon the roof. Here they found themselves in the midst of an exciting scene. The Americans had been driving the Mexicans across the house-tops for some time, but on this spot a strong force had made a stand, and was battling hand to hand with the assailants.

Fuller and Pefferton rushed in, and were soon participating in the fray; while up the ladder behind them came a score of armed men, eager to reinforce their comrades and annihilate the enemy. The fight grew hotter and closer. The angry combatants surged to and fro, in the fierceness of desperation. Guns were clubbed, knives were drawn, and amid the crushing blows that were showered right and left, was heard the sounds of stabbing, and the gasping groans of the victims.

It was not for long. Struggle as they might the Mexicans soon saw what their fate would be if they stood their ground. Their only hope was in retreat, and slowly and reluctantly they began to fall back.

While Fuller was pressing forward, parrying blows and dealing them with equal skill, he was startled by a hoarse, exulting voice, shouting in pure English:

"Ah-ha! you are here! My prayer is answered! Now, by the flends, we will see who is the better man!"

The lieutenant paused while a man in the uniform of a Mexican officer bounded forward,

and struck a menacing attitude in front of him. The lieutenant looked up into the handsome face, to behold his brother, Ralph Fuller—or, as he was known in his adopted country, Captain La Vietro!

"Now, you wolf-cub, I've got you just where I want you," hissed the traitor, with a gleam of deadly hate in his eyes. "To your guard, boy, or I'll run you through the body."

The lieutenant stepped back, as he exclaimed: "My God, brother, you would not do so wicked a thing!"

"Don't call me that," thundered the irate villain. "I am no longer a brother of yours, but an enemy to the death."

"Ralph, are you mad? As Heaven is my judge, I have never given you just cause—"

"A black curse upon you! Do you think to soften me now? Defend yourself, I say, or die!"

As he spoke he made a wild slash at his brother, but the latter threw himself in an attitude of defense and caught the blow on his sword. Ralph, having served his time at West Point, was an adept in the sword exercise, and all that his younger brother knew of the art, he had learned from him. That the apostate was thinking of the advantage he possessed over his antagonist, was shown by the smile of scornful triumph that curled his mustached lip. The lieutenant set his teeth hard, and every muscle of his pale face became as rigid as iron. He made no assault, but employed all his skill in the defense. His quick eye followed his antagonist's hand, and with a dexterity that surprised himself, he turned aside the desperate lunges aimed at him.

The other contestants had surged away from the spot, and they seemed to have that particular roof to themselves. The stunning peals of cannon filled their ears; the fight in the streets was still going on; the cheers of the Americans were loud and incessant, as they carried victory in their path. And yet, no one appeared to notice the uneven struggle between the two young officers. The lieutenant wondered where his comrades were, that they did not interfere?

The clash and clang of the weapons grew fiercer each moment, and fire leaped from the playing steel. Thrust, parry, carte and counter carte. Both foresaw the result. The lieutenant's blade was wrenched from his grasp, and sent spinning over the parapet, while he stood helpless at the mercy of his maddened opponent.

"Strike!" he cried, in a clear calm voice. "I am unarmed, and can no longer defend myself. It will be a deed to boast of, if you take my life now. Strike!"

"I will strike," answered the other, with an oath. "I gave you a chance, and the die is cast. Take that!"

He lifted his sword to deal the fatal blow, but at that instant there was a cry and a bound, and a lithe form sprung between the two men. A ray of light flashed through the air, as the weapon descended. The lieutenant felt himself pushed backward; he was expecting to be struck down, but, to his surprise, he remained unhurt. A low moan, and the sound of a body falling heavily at his feet, told him that some poor creature had suffered in his stead.

Then somebody uttered a shout, and another form bounded upon the scene. A glance showed that the new-comer was Major Pefferton. He held in his hand the Toledo blade which Donna Francisca had given him.

"Wretch! that was a coward's blow," he cried, through his clenched teeth. "You've killed a man worth a thousand such as you."

Ralph Fuller was forced violently backward by the violence of the attack, and scarce a dozen passes had been made when he suddenly turned, and fled at the top of his speed. The major followed, and the next moment they were both lost to view.

CHAPTER XX.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

LIEUTENANT FULLER stood as if rooted to the spot. A ranger was lying at his feet, bleeding and senseless. His breast heaved with emotion, at sight of those familiar features, and he dropped on his knees beside the silent form.

It was Tippy, the Texan!

He looked searchingly at the white, blood-stained face a moment, and then bent down till his cheek almost touched the colorless lips.

"Alas! I fear he is beyond the reach of human aid," he said, as he proceeded to unbutton Tippy's close-fitting jacket, and to tear away the other garments that covered his breast. But, he had no sooner done this than

he started back with a strange cry, and staggered to his feet to gaze in dumb amazement at the prostrate form.

Then he sunk down beside it again, pillowed the bloody head on his arm, and looked earnestly at the beautiful face. For it was beautiful, even in death. The slouched hat had fallen off, and the long flowing hair, though wet with gore, streamed over the officer's arm in a shower of silken tresses.

"It is—it is!" cried Fuller, hoarsely, as he continued to scan the silent features. "I never suspected it! I never dreamed of such a thing! It is she!—it is!—every feature the same—it can be no one else. Why is she here? Why has she followed me? Darling! darling! look up and speak to me. Open your eyes—God help me! she is dead!"

He bowed his head, and gave way to a burst of passionate grief, that shook his frame as the tempest shakes the bleak palmetto. It was fierce while it lasted, but when he lifted his head not a trace of the storm was visible.

Calmly he lifted the form of the young Texan in his arms, and held it close to his bosom while he rose to his feet.

"Nobody must know it," he whispered, glancing uneasily around. "Tis a secret that I must protect for her, now that she can not."

Soldiers were hurrying by, some loading their guns as they ran, and others stopping an instant to discharge them, but none took any notice of him. He made his way back to the trap-door and climbed down the ladder into the prison cell.

Then he passed into the corridor, with the intention of going out upon the street. But here a sight caused him to halt. Donna Francisca had not left the building, but was kneeling on the stone floor just where her lover had parted from her. She held a cross in her hand, and was engaged in silent prayer. Her veil was off, her cloak thrown back, her hands crossed over her bosom, and her unconfined hair, as it tumbled down over her shoulders in midnight waves, swept the ground around her.

At any other time Fuller would have shrunk from interrupting her religious devotions, but now he no sooner discovered her presence than he called to her. She looked up in surprise.

"Pardon me, senorita. I want your help."

"Ah! el teniente," said the lady, rising as she saw who it was addressing her. "Que cosa? What have you here?"

"A comrade," was the rejoinder, as the lieutenant placed his burden gently on the ground.

"Un camarado?" repeated the lady, softly. "Is he dead?"

"Oh, God! I'm afraid so. Do you see any signs of life here? No! no! It was sacrificed to save mine. Look, senorita; don't you recognize this face? 'Tis not the first time you have looked upon it."

Donna Francisca knelt beside the young ranger, and gave his face a close scrutiny. She looked up immediately, and exclaimed:

"Why, it is the little cavallero—the pretty boy who helped you out of prison. It is Tippy, the Texan."

"You are right," said Fuller; "and yet, you are not exactly right either." He hesitated a moment, and then, lowering his voice to a whisper, he added: "I must trust you with a secret, senorita. You have gazed on the beauty of these features, now silent in death, and have failed to guess the truth. They are not a man's, neither do they belong to a boy. Do you understand?"

"Por Dios! no."

"Then I will explain. Tippy, the Texan, is a woman!"

Donna Francisca raised her hands with an expression of mingled amazement and remonstrance.

"A woman! Madre de Dios! you jest!"

"I could hardly jest at such a time as this," said the lieutenant in a faltering voice. "If you doubt it, look for yourself. I have been blind as well as others, but the truth was forced upon me by her death."

"Did you know her before the war?"

"Know her! Yes, yes; I knew and worshiped her. She has assumed male attire and entered the army, for what purpose I do not know, unless it was to shield me from danger. That she has done, at the expense of her life. Oh, this is intolerable!"

"Stay, senor," interposed the lady. "Perhaps it is not as bad as you imagine. Let me feel her heart."

She thrust her hand beneath the white linen, and laid it on the warm breast of the sufferer.

"Why, she is not dead!"

"Not dead!" ejaculated Fuller, with a wild

aspect. "Not dead, did you say? Woman, you dare not deceive me!"

"Nor do I wish to," declared the Donna. "Put your hand here where mine is. Now what have you to say?"

"Her heart palpitates. By heaven, she lives! Senorita, in the name of humanity, advise me! What shall I do? Where shall I take her? She must have medical aid, and yet I don't want to expose her secret to the world."

Donna Francisca rose in an instant, and said:

"Come with me. Carry the lady to my father's house, where mamma and I can nurse her. You need not fear; papa is good and kind, and he will have everything done for her that can be done. Believe me, he is not so strongly prejudiced in favor of the Mexicans as he was three days ago, and you may rest assured that the secret will not go any further out of our family than you desire it to. Come; you can do no better. *Ah, pobrecito!* See how she is bleeding. Here is my cloak; wrap her up in that, till we reach the house."

Fuller did not reply, but hastily drew the cloak around the slight form, and lifted it once more in his arms. The Mexican lady led the way, and in silence they went out upon the street, where but few people were moving, except those who were carrying off the dead and the wounded. The battle had progressed to another quarter.

The residence of the wealthy Spaniard was in sight, and toward it they took their way. Donna Francisca glided on before, and the lieutenant followed with long strides, hugging his precious burden against his bosom as if it were an infant he carried. When they reached the house, they found Don Estevan and his amiable senora there, enjoying a luncheon as coolly as if the whole city were not teeming with blood and carnage.

To Fuller's surprise, no objections were offered to the Donna's plan by her parents. The old gentleman was somewhat stiff in his bearing toward the young officer, whom he recognized as the spy that had been caught in his house, but he listened with a softening countenance to his daughter's statement, and promised to be silent on the subject of the interesting discovery that had just been made. He said his house should be an asylum for the American girl until she had fully recovered, and as much longer as she wished to stay. His tender-hearted wife burst into a flood of tears, and immediately took the sufferer in charge, kissing the white face repeatedly, as if it were her own child that had been brought to her in that condition. A servant was dispatched for a surgeon; not an army surgeon, but a Spanish *medico*, who was a particular friend of Don Estevan's; and, satisfied that the girl was in good hands, Fuller left her and returned to his duty.

The battle was over for this day. The operations of the Americans had been so decisive that they had effected a permanent lodgment in the city, and saw victory already perching on their standards. The Mexicans were driven to the wall, and although they had not as yet been forced to terms, they were in a position that they must either surrender or evacuate the city on the next day.

CHAPTER XXI.

RE-UNITED.

As soon as it was dark that night, two men knocked at the door of Don Estevan's house, and were admitted by the porter. They were Major Pefferton and Lieutenant Fuller. The latter had thrown his friend into a whirlpool of amazement by explaining to him what had occurred, and telling him who Tippy had turned out to be; and as there was now an attraction for both of them at the same place, they had made themselves as presentable as possible under the unfavorable circumstances of their situation, and repaired to the house together.

Captain La Vietro—or Ralph Fuller—had escaped Major Pefferton's vengeance, and the major hoped, for the lieutenant's sake, that he would never have another opportunity to cross blades with the abject traitor.

Don Estevan received the officers a little coldly, but with all the courtly politeness of a true *hidalgo*. His wife was less formal in her manner, and the visitors were no sooner seated than they were placed completely at their ease by the sociable lady. Donna Francisca came into the drawing-room smiling and blushing, dressed in a rich evening costume, and looking gloriously beautiful, as she threw a sly glance at the major. She was accompanied by the Spanish *medico*, who, when introduced to the Americans, cordially took them by the hand, and conducted himself in a manner that proved him a

gentleman of the old school. This personage, with nice discrimination, at once selected Fuller as the one most interested in his patient, and addressed him separately.

"Pardon me, señor; if I mistake not, you are a friend of the young lady whom I have been called upon to attend?"

"A very particular friend," said Fuller, "earnestly."

"Then," resumed the *medico*, "I shall have the pleasure of assuring you that the wound, though painful, is by no means a dangerous one, and that the brave girl will be up in a day or two. Perhaps the man saw her in time to prevent the weapon from falling as hard as he had intended. Besides, I found an ugly cut on her arm, showing that she had thrown it up to shield her head; and this, together with the hat she wore—to say nothing of her thick hair—broke the force of the blow, so that it had no other effect than to stun her, and inflict two slight wounds that will quickly heal."

"Surely, if that is the case, I may see her at once!" said Fuller, rising from his chair with a flushed face, and regarding the surgeon with a look of eager inquiry.

"In truth, I see no reason why you should not," was the pleasant reply. "The *nina* is conscious now, and resting easily, and I promised to send you to her—so go."

The lieutenant was shown into the chamber occupied by the patient, and left alone with her. It was a chamber fit for a princess—Donna Francisca's own—sumptuously furnished, with a bed as tempting as a fairy's couch, and a carpet that gave no sound to the tread of feet.

But Fuller paid no heed to the richness of the furniture. His eager gaze wandered to the couch and its occupant. Through the parted curtains he saw a face—as sweet a face as ever brightened the pathway of man, though just now it was almost as white as the pillow against which it was outlined. The eyes were open; dark, scintillant eyes they were, too, and fairly swimming in tears as they beamed upon him from beneath the silken lashes that overshadowed them. At the sight of that face a host of sleeping memories were awakened in the lieutenant's breast, and with a low cry of joy he sprang to the bedside.

"Clarissa, my own darling!" he exclaimed, as he bent over and passionately kissed the girl's lips.

The bright color trembled in her pale cheeks, and taking one of his hands she held it tightly.

"Dearest, I am yours," she murmured, in a quivering voice; "all yours, and may God forgive me! Sit down."

There was a chair close to the couch; Fuller occupied it mechanically.

"Don't speak to me yet," she said, quickly, as he opened his mouth to say something. "First of all, I must ask a favor of you; I know you will be generous enough to grant it. I am an erring creature, but penitent; and I have at least proved that my love for you is unshaken. There, don't speak. I know your forgiving nature too well. Before going further I will have to extract from you a promise that you will say nothing concerning the rash step I have taken; that you will neither thank nor chide me for any thing in the past."

"Chide you, Clarissa—"

"Hush! I am afraid I deserve it. But, you promise?"

"I do."

She drew his head down, and kissed him.

"I knew you would, you are so kind. Not yet," she added, as he again essayed to speak; "you must first hear me through. I have an explanation to make—"

"Not now, Clarissa. Wait till you are well—"

"Now or never," said the girl, resolutely. "You must let me have my own way now, because I'm an invalid, you know. I'll tell you why our engagement was broken. It was very wrong in me to believe what others said about you, but nobody in San Antonio ever thought of disbelieving the word of your brother Ralph."

"What! was he the author of the mischief?"

"You are doubtless surprised, but it's the truth. He was back in our neighborhood one night and called on me. I thought at the time that he had been home, but I afterward learned that I was the only one in the town who saw him. He came and went in the night. The object of his visit was to estrange you and me. He said it was his painful duty to let me know that you were deceiving me—that, as my friend, he could not stand idly by and see me so cruelly treated, and begged me, as I valued my happiness, to dismiss you at once. He talked as Ralph always talked at that time—like a man

who scorns to tell a lie. You know how highly I esteemed him. Everybody did. We all thought him the soul of honor. I can not now repeat all that he said, but he made me believe that you were shamefully deceiving me, and I took off the engagement ring before his eyes. I acted unwisely, but we are both happy now, and you mustn't scold me, please. He named a girl he said you were soon to wed, and told me she was already making her bridal-robe. Then he went away. A week later I received a letter from him, in which he pressed his suit, saying that he loved me as he could never love another, and urging me to give him some hope. I wrote a reply, telling him candidly that I did not love him as a wife should love her husband, and, consequently, I could neither consent to marry him, nor give him the slightest hope. His next letter opened my eyes. He tauntingly confessed that he had made up the story of your perfidy, but declared you should never marry me, and take the place that had been refused him. He said that he had joined the Mexicans, and, having learned that you were in the Texan army, he would spare no pains to meet and kill you, even though it must be done in the foulest manner imaginable."

"I was shocked. I hardly know why I ran away from home and followed the army, but perhaps I had a dim idea of shielding you from that man's vengeance. And I really believe I did it to-day."

"You did, darling; God bless you!" said Fuller, with emotion, again taking the liberty of embracing and kissing her.

And they talked on for a long time, these reunited lovers, and were as happy as lovers could be. Many little things were explained to the entire satisfaction of both, and many subjects, important only in their own eyes, were thoroughly aired; but the brave girl ranger refused to let her lover revert to her recent deeds of valor, and the disguise in which she had performed them. Tippy, the Texan, was no more; and Clarissa Vance was a heroine of no ordinary kind.

But Clarissa was still weak from loss of blood, and observing at length that she was growing weary, Fuller took his departure, and promising to come again the next day.

As he passed the drawing-room, he heard the family and Pefferton in pleasant conversation within. He did not enter. Desiring to be alone with his thoughts for awhile, he concluded to go out and take a walk in the open air, and return presently for the major. As he stepped through the *saguan*, he told the porter he would be back in a few minutes; and then the great door closed behind him, and he was standing under the starry sky. The street was dark and deserted. In the western part of the city the thunder of battle still continued, and looking in that direction, he saw shells crossing and bursting in mid air, while the yells of the gunners occasionally rose in triumphant chorus.

Fuller started along the pavement at a slow sauntering gait, but he had not taken more than a dozen steps when a voice cried:

"Ah-ha! you're in my clutches now. You have once escaped my vengeance, but, by the gods, you can't again! Take that!"

A pistol cracked, and he felt a bullet graze his left arm.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST ENCOUNTER.

FULLER unsheathed his sword in a twinkling, and stood on the defensive. Then the same voice ejaculated, furiously:

"A curse upon me! I have missed him! But, may I die a dog's death if Heaven itself can save him from my vengeance now!"

Two men emerged from a dark nook, and sprung toward him. One of them carried a sword, uplifted in his hand, and was attired in a Mexican officer's uniform. There was no mistaking his figure, even in the dark, but Fuller had already recognized his brother's voice, and comprehended all in a moment.

It was plain that Ralph had seen him and the major enter Don Estevan's house, and, with his confere, had laid in wait for them to come out.

As he leaped forward, he struck a blow that would have laid his brother in the dust, had not the latter been on his guard. As it was, the murderous weapon glanced from the opposing steel, and the lieutenant stood up unharmed. Blow followed blow in rapid succession, and once more the brothers closed in mortal combat. The fight was a fierce one, and the sparks flew from the clashing steel. Thrust and parry, feint and guard, tierce and carte, lunge and disengagement. The lieutenant struggled hard to

keep off the assailant's point, but he knew he could not long be successful against so skillful a fencer.

"Ralph, this is madness," he panted, moving his blade with the swiftness of lightning to meet the thrusts of his adversary. "For God's sake, desist! What peace will you ever have in this world if you stain your hand with a brother's blood? Think again, before you perpetrate this horrible crime."

The villain did not answer—he did not even seem to hear—but the next moment, he cried out in Spanish to his companion:

"*Madre de Dios*, somebody's coming! Ortiz, hit this milk-sop on the head, and finish him quick! Do you hear? Quick, for your life! *Por amor Dios, anda—anda!* Strike hard, and run!"

The command was no sooner given than something descended with stunning force upon the lieutenant's head, and he fell to the ground with the blood streaming over his face.

Then there was a woman's scream and a man's shout, and a dark form leaped over him. Stars danced before his eyes, and strange noises filled his ears. He tried to rise, but sunk back weak and dizzy. He heard the clangor and hiss of contending steel. With a determined effort he raised himself, and rested on his elbow. A bright light flashed upon the scene, and he saw two men fighting desperately with swords. One was his brother; the other was—who? He dashed the blood from his eyes, and looked again. Ah! it was Major Pefferton.

At the very instant that he made this discovery, he saw his brother throw up his hands and fall heavily to the ground, with the major's sword run through and through his body.

There was a woman's voice mingled with the rustle of a dress, and the lieutenant saw Donna Francisca's face bending over him—and her father's, too, and her mother's, and the major's, and the *medico's*; while a servant stood off with a burning taper in his hand. He was conscious of being lifted to his feet, and assisted into the house, where the blood was washed from his head and face; and it was not until this was done that objects resumed their natural distinctness in his eyes. He had been hit with the butt of a pistol, in the hand of his brother's accomplice, who had done his work too quick to do it well, and had saved his life by flight.

The pistol-shot, through which the assassination had first been attempted, had alarmed the inmates of the house, who had rushed out in a body to learn the cause of the disturbance.

Their appearance was providential, and the result twofold. The lieutenant's life was saved, and Ralph Fuller was killed.

With this we close our story. The traitor who had madly vowed, and more than once attempted, to kill his brother, had fallen a victim to his own treachery; and with his existence ended the mission of Tippy, the Texan. Of course Tippy was never seen afterward, and no one marveled at his disappearance. In the weeks and months that followed, when he became the subject of conversation around the camp-fire, it was always said, in good faith, that the poor boy fell at Monterey, and not a few claimed to have seen Lieutenant Fuller carrying his corse from the field. There were a few who knew the whole truth, but those few never divulged the secret to others. It was a prevailing impression among his comrades that the brave youth filled a soldier's grave.

Clarissa Vance recovered rapidly, and when the Mexicans had marched out of the city, leaving the Americans in undisputed possession, she shared the wardrobe of Donna Francisca, and the reckless warrior was transformed into a quiet lady, as gentle and modest as she was pretty and accomplished.

The two girls became close friends, and spent much of their time teaching each other their languages. During the idleness of the army, Fuller and Pefferton were daily visitors at the house of Don Estevan de Salamanca, and were soon in the good graces of the old gentleman, who began to receive them very cordially indeed, and finally urged them to make their calls more frequent.

Those were halcyon days, but they passed like a fleeting dream. Fuller obtained leave of absence, and went home with Clarissa. There he left her, and returned to his duty, bearing with him her laughing promise to remain quietly at home during the rest of the war.

Through the southern campaign, from the coast to the capital, the two gallant officers fought side by side. Neither was fortunate enough to come out without a wound, but both were glad to escape with their lives and limbs,

and when they bid farewell to the hardships of war, it was with a pleasant knowledge that they had performed their duty faithfully. Two happy marriages followed close upon their release from the army. Don Estevan and his wife are proud of their gallant son-in-law, who spends a portion of his time with them, but the beautiful Francisca is so fond of Mrs. Fuller that the major has long occupied a plantation adjoining that of the lieutenant in Texas.

THE END.

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